

2015 GEAR GUIDE

THE BEST NEW

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CRAG PACKS, HARNESES & MORE!

Climbing

THE DAWN WALL

TOMMY, KEVIN
& THE CLIMB OF
THE CENTURY

"THE POWER
OF BELIEF"

BY TOMMY CALDWELL

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THAT WON'T
BREAK THE BANK



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ETIQUETTE



GEAR



SKILL




HEALTH

Cover photo by Corey Rich / Big UP Productions / Aurora Photos: Kevin Jorgeson battles the 5.14d crux pitch of El Capitan's Dawn Wall.

88 THE FLOW



BLUEWATER ROPES HAS SPONSORED TOMMY CALDWELL FOR OVER 20 YEARS BECAUSE WE SHARE THE SAME VALUES: THE IMPORTANCE OF HARD WORK, DETERMINATION, AND AN ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT TO A DREAM. WE ARE AS PASSIONATE ABOUT MAKING THE BEST ROPES IN THE WORLD AS TOMMY IS ABOUT EL CAPITAN. OUR 9.1MM ICON IS THE MOST DURABLE, SOFTEST CATCHING PERFORMANCE ROPE IN THE WORLD, AND WE ARE HAPPY TO SAY THE ICON HAS NOW PROTECTED THE HARDEST BIG-WALL FREE CLIMB IN THE WORLD! WOOHOO TOMMY!!!

A man in a green long-sleeved shirt and black pants is climbing a steep, textured rock face. He is wearing a pink backpack and has a rope attached to his harness. The background shows a clear blue sky and distant mountains.

ALWAYS BETWEEN YOU AND THE GROUND

"I am always thinking about the kind of dad I want to be. I know that the best way to teach is to show by example. For me the Dawn Wall is the perfect venue for some of the most important values I want to show Fitz: Optimism, perseverance, dedication and the importance of dreaming big." - Tommy Caldwell

Photo: Tim Kemple

BlueWater
Ropes

BOREAL



THE ART OF FRICTION

Sam Hamer on Ulysees Bow. Photo: Mike Hutton

Climbing

LEADING SINCE 1970

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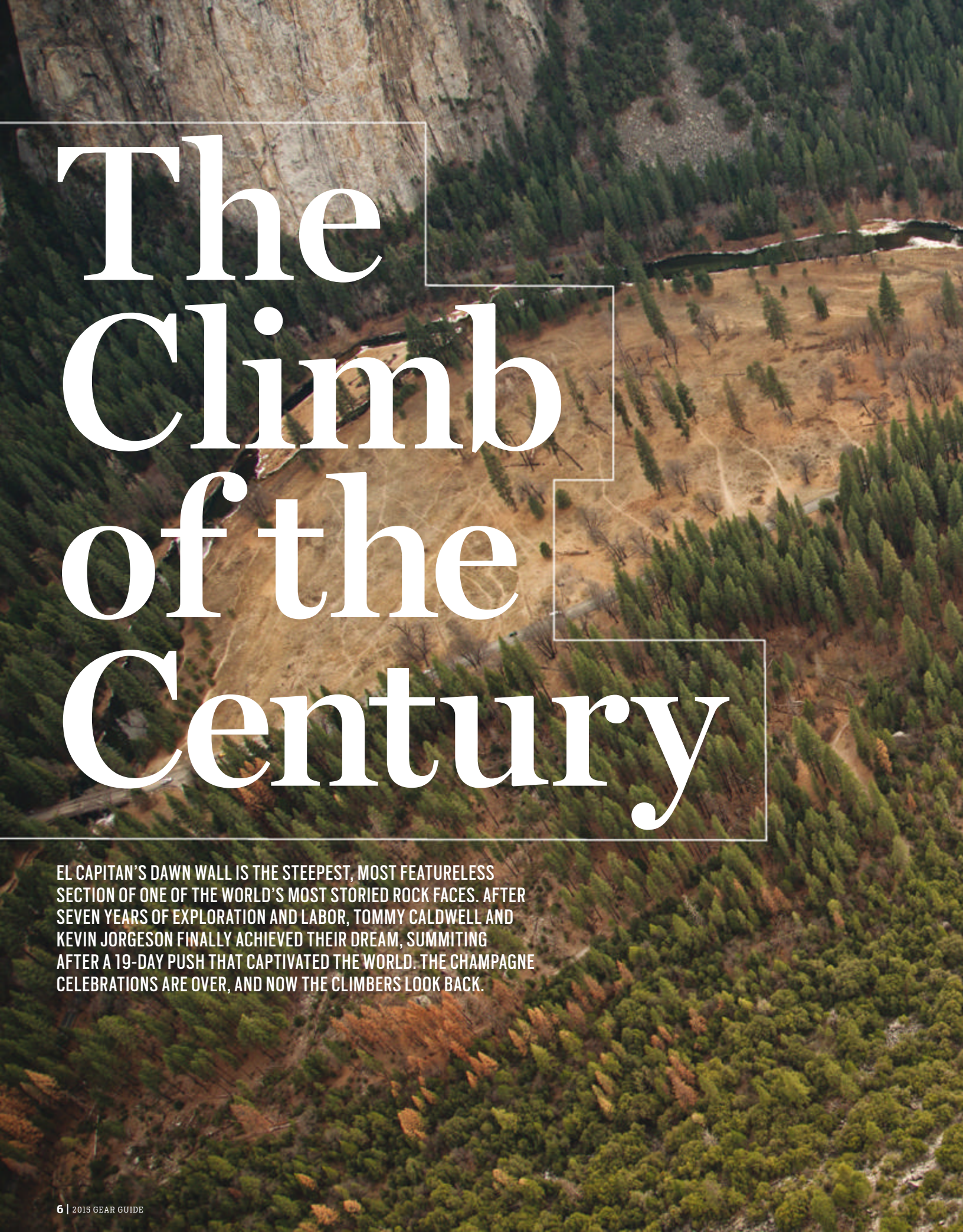
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ADVENTURE TESTED

An aerial photograph of a mountain landscape. In the upper left, a steep, rocky mountain face is visible. Below it, a river flows through a valley. The valley is filled with dense evergreen forests, with some areas of dry, brownish ground. The title 'The Climb of the Century' is overlaid in large white serif font, with a white outline box framing the text.

The Climb of the Century

EL CAPITAN'S DAWN WALL IS THE STEEPEST, MOST FEATURELESS SECTION OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST STORIED ROCK FACES. AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF EXPLORATION AND LABOR, TOMMY CALDWELL AND KEVIN JORGESON FINALLY ACHIEVED THEIR DREAM, SUMMITTING AFTER A 19-DAY PUSH THAT CAPTIVATED THE WORLD. THE CHAMPAGNE CELEBRATIONS ARE OVER, AND NOW THE CLIMBERS LOOK BACK.



TOMMY CALDWELL REACHES A RARE BUT WELCOME JUG AMONG AN OCEAN OF BLANK GRANITE ON THE DAWN WALL OF EL CAPITAN. IT TOOK A FINAL 19-DAY PUSH FOR CALDWELL AND PARTNER KEVIN JORGESON TO COMPLETE THIS SEVEN-YEAR VISION.

A Belief

BY TOMMY CALDWELL



The Dawn Wall became so much bigger than Kevin and me. That was definitely not by design—it just sort of happened—but I can't imagine a more positive outcome. I've been totally obsessed by this project for years—in fact, “El Cap” was one of my little boy Fitz's first words, which is pretty funny. He spends time in the Valley with me and my wife, and he could sense the excitement around our climb. It's such a beautiful line, just an amazing thing. I totally reformatted my life for the past seven years to do everything I could to reach this dream.

It took a couple years of swinging around on ropes studying the wall with a microscopic lens just to find the line of holds that could get us to the top. Then we spent years and years figuring out all the logistics and strategies for where basecamp would go and just how we would work the route. I've climbed a lot of routes on El Cap at this point, and I've used various styles of big wall climbing. With the Dawn Wall, I tried not to make hard and fast rules in terms of ground-up or top-down or using fixed ropes. I've done them all. I've gone ground-up in a day with just a small backpack, but this was going to be something more at the other end of the spectrum.

I see style as something you can play with to construct the greatest possible experience. We knew that in order to finish this climb we'd need both ample time and to focus on the climbing, so we decided it had to be done in a single push. But we also knew we needed to give ourselves basically every other possible advantage we could find, in terms of pre-stashing a basecamp right in the middle of the wall and having supplies brought up to us. That really worked out. I knew I wasn't a good enough climber not to have fixed ropes or to do it in a day or something crazy like that. Plus, if we had stuck to a ground-up ethic, we never would have found the route to begin with. It just couldn't have been done ground-up, and if you tried to do it that way, you would have had to drill literally thousands of holes to aid climb your way up the wall in all these different



World's Best Partner
Kevin Jorgeson discusses:

Making Inspiration Last
It was a magical accident

that this climb got so much attention. We had to focus on the climb while we were on the wall, but once we got down and didn't have that buffer [from the outside world], we were up at 3:30 a.m. doing morning shows and interviews for 12 hours straight. All that attention was on us, and while I don't have

cable television, I think I know how the news cycle works: It comes and it goes, you know? So, on the one hand, how cool to have a positive story out there that inspired people, but on the other, it felt very one-way, that attention all on us, on the climb, on the feat. That feels very precarious and temporary, so I thought

about that on the wall—because I had a lot of rest days working on pitch 15—and I really wanted to turn that inspiration back around in a way. To take a mirror and put it in front of the Dawn Wall as an accomplishment and make people who were inspired by the project think about it for themselves. The world

WITH 19 OF 32 TOTAL
PITCHES RATED 5.13- TO
5.14+, THE DAWN WALL IS
NOW THE BENCHMARK FOR
THE HARDEST BIG WALL
FREE CLIMB IN THE WORLD.







KEVIN JORGESON TREADS CAREFULLY ACROSS THE 5.14D PITCH 15, WHICH HE BATTLED FOR MORE THAN A WEEK BEFORE REDPOINTING, DUE TO REPEATED RIPS IN HIS SKIN FROM THE RAZOR-SHARP HOLDS.



ABOVE INFAMOUS WINO TOWER, THE REMAINING PITCHES FEATURE BURLY CLIMBING WITH MORE THAN A LITTLE LOOSE ROCK. CALDWELL AND JORGESON HAD ONLY CLIMBED THESE PITCHES ONCE BEFORE THE PUSH.



directions to find out if a free climb was even possible. In the end, the single-push style is just what made sense.

This year, we spent two months working on the Dawn Wall before we even went for the final push. We'd jumar up every day and work on the route from 4 p.m. when the route goes into the shade until 10 p.m. or midnight. Then we'd come down and take a shower and kind of live our lives on the ground. We did it like that so we'd gain strength throughout the season. I even left Yosemite a couple times to train in the climbing gym. Part of that was to refresh skin, and part of that was to keep strong in ways that you lose when you're only on El Cap. I also read the *The Rock Climber's Training Manual* [ed., Written by Michael L. Anderson, Ph.D., and Mark L. Anderson, this covers a training program that's become known as the Rock Prodigy method] and did a lot of fingerboard training over the years, which is especially important for me since I'm missing a finger. I need to compensate for that in terms of finger strength. Building strength, working on technique, and practicing patience were key.

I knew my biggest challenge would be the dyno on pitch 16, so I rebuilt it on my shed and tried it literally thousands of times. Ironically, I didn't even end up doing the dyno on the final push. After failing at it over and over again, beating my body up, and getting really depressed, somehow I saw this ramp going down the wall 30 feet back across the previous pitch. I guess I just never looked at that exact part of the wall. I never thought the way forward would be to climb 30 feet back across the pitch I'd just climbed, climb down 100 feet, across and back up, and then essentially end up only five feet from where I started. It seemed too absurd to look for something like that, but that's what ended up happening! The dyno was super-cool, and I wish I could have gone that way. But this was a creative solution that I definitely needed.

Pitch 16 was the biggest battle of any on the final push for me. It took me five or six tries, mainly because I hadn't practiced it that much. But every other pitch I did within two or three. I felt really confident up there, but every single one of those hard pitches was a fight to the death. There were probably 12 pitches on the route where I was completely maxed out—absolute battles, which was really cool.

It's weird, in retrospect, how you can look at things several times, even with that microscopic lens, and not know for sure whether it's going to be possible to free climb.

FROM LEFT: JORGESON TOPROPES PITCH 16 (5.14A); JORGESON TRIED SEVERAL TAPING AND GLUING METHODS TO "FIX" HIS WRECKED HANDS AND FINGERS; JORGESON RELAXES IN HIS PORTALEGE AND CHECKS HIS SKIN A WEEK AFTER STARTING THE BIG PUSH.

will forget our names, the pitches, and all of the details, and that's just human nature and a reality of the news and how much noise there is in our lives. So instead of fighting that, we have an opportunity right now to define and influence what the general population will remember and what that means for them. And

what's more powerful than a self-definition of something? It's way better than memorization. If it's yours, you'll never forget it. So what's your Dawn Wall, and what's it all about? It's just a simple question. You were inspired by this dream, this effort, and this teamwork. That's awesome, but you can

do that, too. These human experiences we had up on that wall are not specific or exclusive to rock climbing, so I really wanted to turn that around so people can remember that and define that for themselves in their own context. And that's the one thing I really hope sticks. I don't want anyone to

remember my name. I really don't care. But if they can tackle their own Dawn Wall, so to speak, well, how cool?! How cool to use what we did as an example of what's possible.

Hand Care

You start with prevention, and then you deal with

maintenance. I split the index finger of my right hand on day two, literally on the first sharp hold of the route, on pitch 6. Such a bummer. Then I split my middle finger on pitch 9, and it was so cold and dry that the healing process was really slow. They didn't seem like serious splits, so I wasn't being as proactive as I should have



FROM LEFT:
JORGESON CLIMBS
PITCH 15 AT NIGHT FOR
COLDER TEMPS AND
IMPROVED FRICTION;
CROWDS AND NEWS
CREWS GATHER IN EL
CAP MEADOW FOR A
PRESS CONFERENCE;
CALDWELL TAKES
A MOMENT TO
CELEBRATE THE SEND
AT THE TOP.

Usually I'm really optimistic, but when Kevin first came on board, I showed him the crux traverse pitches, and he said, "Uh, these don't look free climbable to me!" We tried top roping the moves because I was like, "Yeah, I think it's possible!" It ended up going that way, but it took a combination of analyzing every inch of rock and building a belief that it was possible. Luckily, on this push, things came together, and it was a really positive experience for me for those 19 days.

The fact that we were able to share our experience so effectively in real time through social media gave people a glimpse into it. Other people were able to see what makes it so cool in a way that you don't generally get with this type of climbing. I think the fact that we were up there for so darn long created this really cool format where people could check in each day to see our progress, which had the snowball effect of getting more people interested. And then it went viral—people were excited just because other people were excited. A good percentage of the interviews we've done, especially early on, were with people who really didn't even know what we were doing up there. They were just excited because there was a lot of hype building.

Climbing becomes more and more mainstream every year, and there are climbing gyms now in every major city. So more people knew about climbing prior to this, but this climb was cool even outside of that world; people who haven't been to climbing gyms or ever climbed seemed to understand it suddenly. This project articulated climbing in a way that helped people recognize that this isn't some sport for adrenaline junkies and thrill seekers. That there's actually a depth to it, that it can be life-changing and amazing in so many ways. The reasons that we, as climbers, love climbing are now apparent to more people.

It makes me feel like I need to be a good ambassador for what we do, for the outdoors, for Yosemite National Park, and just to be a really good person all around. With the Dawn Wall and other things, like Jimmy Chin's *Meru* film making it into the Sundance Film Festival, I feel this energy, like we're on the verge of something new in climbing, which is exciting. Climbing is an incredibly healthy and awesome way to live. It's this life-driving force for me—how awesome if that can be shared!

I came down from the wall feeling completely blessed and lucky to have such a great family and friends, and to have stumbled across this thing that drove me for so long. I'm still on a high from that, and I'm not sure I'll ever come down.

More Dawn Wall!

Read extended interviews with Tommy and Kevin, listen to audio, watch video, and see the best photography of the Dawn Wall in an immersive experience at climbing.com/dawnwall.

been, using Climb On or Neosporin or something like that to moisturize like that to moisturize while I slept at night. But they just weren't healing, so I had to climb all the way through pitch 14 with both those fingers taped. We'd sand all the little micro-tears down in hopes of having smooth calluses to grab the rock.

Tommy moisturized a lot because his skin is drier than mine. For tape, Beth Rodden and Randy Puro totally saved my ass. They sent up this awesome roll of tape from Australia, Elastoplast, which had a much more fabric-like texture and a stronger tensile strength to the fibers. That made a huge

difference. Then I had to experiment with different taping techniques. I crowdsourced on Facebook to find different methods of wrapping split tips, tried those out, and finally settled on a technique that worked, one that Alex Megos told me about. And then I started using

Super Glue. So I would apply Super Glue to the whole finger. And then as I was wrapping the tape, I'd make sure there was glue where the tape overlapped, and then I would Super Glue on top of the tape. I was a total dork about it all. And it would last, you know, 12 minutes for a redpoint

burn, and then I'd have to rip it all off and do it all over again.

Resolve

All you have is the resolve in that moment to do it. There's no if this, then that. It's just, "I'm going to do this pitch." It's very simple and in the moment.

B R A N D O F T H E B R A V E

For more information about Sasha DiGiulian and Five Ten® Team VXi with Stealth® rubber please visit us at fiveten.com

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TEAM 5.10



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THE APPROACH



Climbing staff and gear testers pose in front of a Chattanooga mural dedicated to one of our favorite food groups.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Testing Life

BY SHANNON DAVIS

→ The first thing I did after getting home to Colorado from Chattanooga was shop for houses. The climbing around Chatty is that good—some might even call it “world-class mega-dank.” I’d heard for years how sweet the scene was, but being a typically arrogant and skeptical Boulderite, I had my doubts. What town could compete? What with Boulder Canyon, the Flatirons, Eldorado Canyon, and five gyms within spitting distance of our office?

Well, during our weeklong staff gear-testing trip to Chattanooga last fall, we found so much rock that you could climb something new every single day for years, as many psyched local climbers as you’ll find anywhere, the country’s coolest climbing gym (what’s up, High Point!), and probably the world’s best fried chicken (served with a cold forty no less!). That all adds up to good living. We were there to test gear for this issue; after all, good gear keeps us alive, safe, and comfortable. Gear is a means to an end, so we can have a lifetime of moments like those we had exploring Chatty, laughing it up while cragging at Castle Rock or climbing every V3 at Little Rock City or running into old climbing partners at the local hostel. Which is why we climb to begin with.



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PHOTO: CARLO NASISSETT FOR THE TRIPLE CROWN OF BOULDERING

UNSOLICITED BETA

I enjoy your magazine a great deal, but I have one suggestion: Stick to writing about climbing and stay away from baking. Your “Cookie Monster” article (No. 332) included a chocolate chip cookie recipe from *The Feed Zone Cookbook*. This has to be the runniest, most foul-tasting cookie recipe I’ve ever tried, and my fat ass has tried a lot. I’m sorry for the hostility, but I really wanted to have some yummy cookies. I did find that adding half a cup more flour helped a lot. Other than the baking snafu, keep up the great work!

—Chad Miller, Grand Junction, Colorado

Ed. Note: Sorry. We did have to try a couple of times ourselves. The key was letting the butter mixture cool before adding it. We still like them better than most bars!

Letter of the Month

I like your magazine! I am a big fan of *Climbing*. Keep doing what you are doing; it helps inspire people to do cool stuff. I enjoy your tips on climbing and your equipment suggestions. I have been able to find great advice on shoes and ropes. It saved me from searching online and researching products, giving me more time to be outside. I would like to see more stories about old, famous climbing tales and maybe some stories about discovering new routes. I look forward to your next issue.

—James Cox, Age 13



Congratulations, James! Your flattering letter and obvious psych has won our Letter of the Month, and we’re sending you a Trango Phase Mega Rack Pack! That’s

eight carabiners to start or continue your collection. Want to score some swag too? Contact us through one of the platforms below for your chance to win a sweet piece of Trango gear each month!

KEEP IN TOUCH



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10 Questions With Angie Payne

Pro boulderer. Comp climber. First woman to send V13. In 2014 sent four-year project *Freaks of the Industry* (V13) in Rocky Mountain National Park.

1. What’s your greatest strength as a climber?

Physically, I would say body tension or crimping. But even more important is my stubbornness. Most of my greatest achievements in climbing can be attributed to persistence and a refusal to quit trying.

2. Greatest weakness?

Physically, pinches and powerful, shoulder-intensive moves. However, I’d say that often my mind stops me before my body does. I’m not always the most open-minded and flexible in terms of beta or my capabilities.

3. What’s one thing you never go climbing without?

My camera, whether that’s my iPhone or my “real” camera. Taking photos of my surroundings on the hike and during rest periods has become an important part of the outdoor experience for me. For better or worse, I’d say technology has enhanced my enjoyment of and appreciation for being outside.

4. Crimps or slopers?

Crimps, without a doubt. I crimp everything—even slopers!

5. How do you celebrate a big send?

I’m a big supporter of celebrating successes, no matter how small. When a big success comes along, I don’t hold back on the celebration. My go-to send treat is a Heath Blizzard from Dairy Queen. Perhaps it’s superstitious, but I reserve that particular flavor to celebrate a send. Depending on the personal significance of the send, other treats may also be involved, including (but not limited to) sprinkle-covered donuts, beer, burgers, and chocolate. When I sent my four-year project, I jumped in the frigid alpine lake nearby.

6. What would you be doing if you’d never discovered climbing?

I would likely be living a “typical” Midwestern life in Ohio: married with kids and following a more traditional career path, probably as a doctor or veterinarian.

7. Describe your ultimate dream boulder project.

It would be sandstone (my favorite), on a 25° wall, with tension moves between perfect crimps or flat edges and a committing topout. And most importantly, it would be an obvious and gorgeous line in a beautiful location.

8. What was the most important factor in your success on *Freaks of the Industry*?

It sounds trite, but it came down to fully making the decision to do it. I had gotten very used to falling, and I think a big part of me wasn’t ready to move past the process of projecting that particular problem. Working *Freaks* was very reflective of what was going on in my life (as climbing often is), and when I finally decided to take charge and move forward, I sent.

9. What’s the “easiest” problem or route that’s shut you down?

There’s a problem at Mt. Evans called *The Dali Stand Start* (V6) that revolves around a big jump. It took me upwards of five years to do the problem with the jump. Although I did send with nasty, crimpy workaround beta earlier, I really wanted to do the dyno. There’s also a long list of problems in Fontainebleau that are the equivalent of V4 and easier that shut me down. That’s just one of the reasons that Font is amazing.

10. #1 piece of advice for new climbers?

Enjoy the process of it all. No matter how strong you get, there will always be something harder to try. Success is fleeting and infrequent in climbing, so it’s a lot more enjoyable if you embrace the roller coaster of frustration and fun that happens during your pursuit of the “send,” whatever that may be.

OBVIOUS LINES

Does gym climbing count as rock climbing?

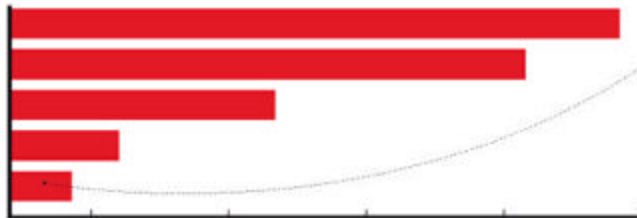
It's not climbing, but it's a great way to train for climbing — **39%**

Yes — **33%**

Only if weather prevents outdoor climbing — **17%**

There are no rocks, therefore it's not rock climbing — **7%**

Other — **4%**



*Source: Climbing reader survey. Join at climbing.com/readerpanel.

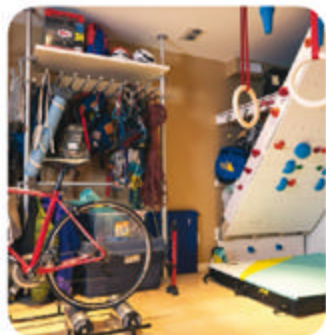
OTHER:

- "Climbing is climbing."
- "It's just different, no better or worse."
- "It doesn't, but don't hassle the gym rats, man!"

RE-GRAM

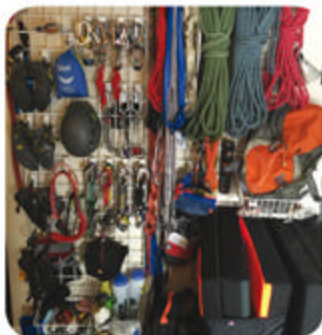
#GearClosets

A climber's gear closet is a special place. It's where we keep all of our favorite things, from the jingliest cams to the stinkiest shoes. We asked our readers to share their gear closets and received photos of everything from gear rooms to gear corners to gear piles on the floor. Here are a few of our favorite gear-storage setups.



My man cave! Climbing gear, ropes, backpacks, and jackets on the rack. Camping gear stored behind the multi-purpose shelving unit (AKA systems board).

—Byron Yu



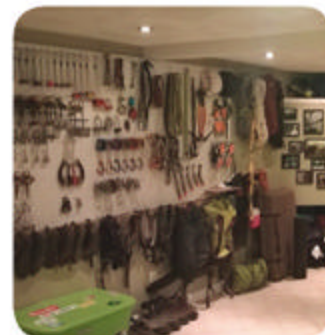
My friends refer to it as "The Store," and it takes up half my bedroom wall.

@dr_leppenstern



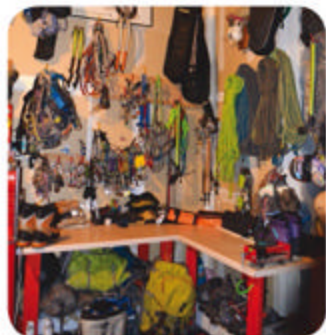
We don't have a washer or dryer, so we made good use of our washer/dryer space.

—Geoff Jones



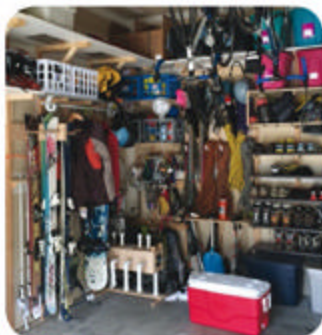
My gear outgrew its closet, so I had to make a gear room.

—Kyle Harris



My booty closet's forever growing. It's somewhat-organized chaos. Everything has a place, or at least shares one. Oh, and drywall makes for excellent tool placements.

—Logan Berndt



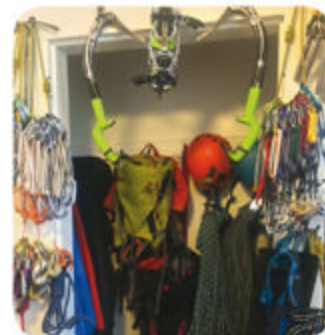
Our gear garage stores tons of gear for two people and multiple sports, without sacrificing parking space.

—Ren Ling



From the hard splitters of the Waterfall to the beauty of Isolation Canyon, this is our grab-and-go gear wall for all of our Arizona climbing adventures!

—Tim and Lauren Held



College livin' doesn't come with a lot of closet space. Sometimes you've gotta get creative.

@maver1212

ARCHIVES

First Sightings: The Grigri



In June 1991, *Climbing* took its first look at the then-new and crazy Grigri belay device in a review titled “Can’t Touch This” (the MC Hammer hit had been released one year prior), and testers were immediately impressed, saying, “The new Petzl Grigri is the closest thing to a robot available, providing foolproof, almost-effortless belaying.”

Climbing was so confident in the device’s braking abilities in 1991, the review suggested, “If the leader falls

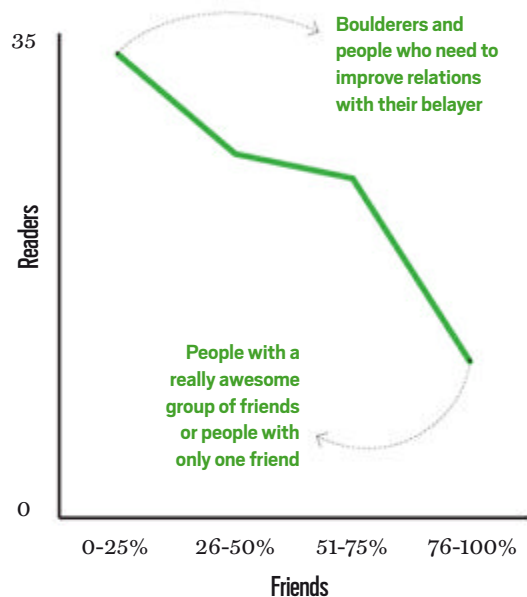
while the belayer is reading a book, the device will still arrest the fall.” In fact, a Petzl ad in our June 1992 issue touted, “The Grigri provides another layer of security, in case your belayer...has both hands on a peanut butter sandwich.” The company isn’t quite so brazen today; their current guidelines require the belayer to always keep a hand on the brake strand. And that is, of course, our current-day advice as well.

The verdict? “Is the Grigri worth its \$79.90 price tag? Its tendency to accidentally lock up on certain ropes, and its limited single-rope application instinctively tells us ‘no way.’ But, every product has its bugs, and considering that when properly used the Grigri works better than anything yet devised, its high cost seems more bearable.”

Time has shown the product to be a gleaming success, as we awarded the Grigri an Editors’ Choice Gold Award in our August 2014 issue.

RIDGE LINES

What percentage of your friends are climbers?



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UNBELAYVABLE!

Scary (and true) tales from a crag near you

I was at the local climbing gym when I heard a little girl talking to her dad behind me. "But Dad, this knot don't look like the one the guy showed us," she said. I turned around to see her dad assuring her that it was fine and that she should start climbing. He had threaded the rope through her harness and made an overhand knot. It was their first day climbing. The instructor had showed them how to tie a figure eight then walked away.

—Malek Alshayeb, via email

LESSON: To be clear, it sounds like this dad took the end of the rope, passed it through both of his daughter's tie-in points, then tied a single overhand knot around the rope running from the harness to the top rope anchor with the end. The problem with this is how easily overhand knots can untie themselves. As a tie-in knot, it will likely slide toward the harness when weighted, then the tail could pull through the knot, untying it completely. A single overhand knot is not a suitable tie-in knot. The figure eight is our preferred tie-in knot because it's strong, easy to tie, easy enough to untie (though sometimes a challenge), and easy to inspect. The last quality gives it the edge over a bowline.

I saw this guy rappelling off Intersection Rock in Joshua Tree. His rope didn't reach the ground, but it was long enough to reach a big ledge most people walk off. I didn't think much of it. He looked like he was going pretty fast though, so I stopped to see what he was doing. He was about to pass the ledge and was coming to the end of his rope when I yelled, "Stop! Hey! Your rope's not on the ground!" My buddies quickly

chimed in. He stopped just in time to swing to the ledge and not rap off the end of his rope, which wasn't knotted.

—Reese Butler, via Climbing.com

LESSON: Always, always, always knot the ends of your rappel rope. It's such a simple thing to do, and it would save so many lives. We recommend the triple barrel knot, but many knots will do the job. You won't always know if both strands of your rope have reached the ground, but if the ends are knotted, they'll jam in your rappel device before a catastrophic accident occurs. If you are in doubt about the length of the rappel, err on the side of caution and stop early to build an intermediate anchor.

I saw some guys climbing on a plastic yellow rope from the hardware store. They were excited about how cheap it was. They were even using a Grigri.

—Kenneth Laing Herdy, via Facebook

LESSON: It's absolutely essential to always use gear that's designed, tested, and rated for climbing. A cheap hardware store rope will break under small loads, is not abrasion resistant, likely will not function properly with a Grigri's camming device, will not stretch in a fall, and is absolutely not designed or rated for climbing. Your rope is the most important piece in your safety system, and without it, nothing else works. No amount of money saved is worth a climber's life.

See something unbelayable? Email unbelayable@climbing.com.

Details That Matter

#3 EXTRA TOE ROOM

The Red Eagle Lace's extra toe room, combined with an aggressive downturn and stiff midsole, spreads power throughout the foot, allowing climbers to leverage strength from their whole foot. Add a solid heel pocket, premium materials and an anti-microbial lining, and the result is a high performance, high quality rock shoe that excels on anything vertical or overhanging.

It's details like these that have earned LOWA's reputation for building the world's finest outdoor performance footwear – now including rock shoes.

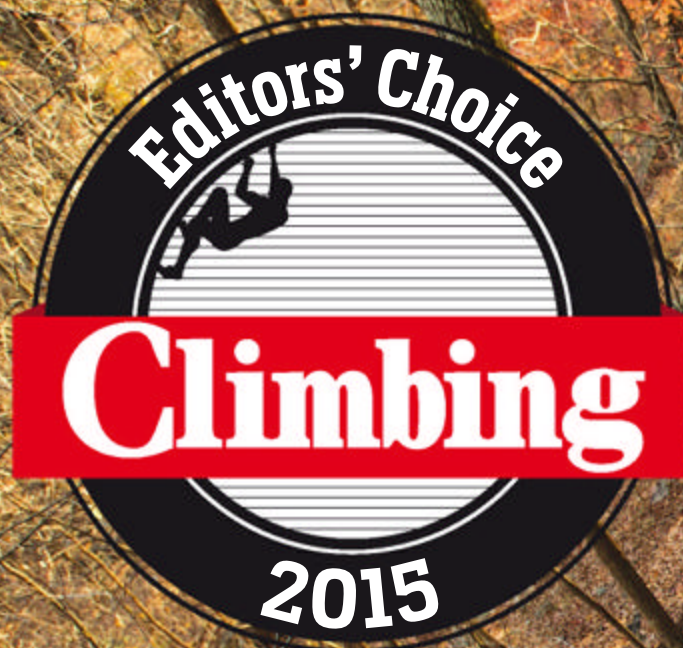
LOWA

100% HANDCRAFTED IN EUROPE

To see LOWA's new line of rock shoes, visit www.lowaboos.com




NEW Red Eagle - Lace



WINNERS

As editors of a climbing magazine, part of our job description includes traveling to cool climbing areas with the latest and greatest gear and putting it through its paces—all in the name of “testing.” Yeah, we’re pretty lucky. Of course, it’s not all peaches and cream. We eventually have to decide which products are worthy of a mention, and which are better left on the shelf. Every year there are several items that shine brightest, proving themselves to be absolutely must-have pieces of gear. We bestow those top picks with the gear world’s premier prize: Editors’ Choice. This year, we winnowed a field of hundreds of products to select these 15 coolest, best-performing, and most drool-worthy gear picks.



Paul Creme does some late Autumn gear testing on *Wristlets* (5.11c/d), Foster Falls, Tennessee, with two Editors' Choice winners: the Patagonia Nano-Air jacket and Scarpa Furia rock shoe.

PATAGONIA NANO-AIR

Problem: Puffy jackets, whether down or synthetic, provide warmth but don't breathe well, so you have to take them off and then throw them back on to regulate your temperature. **Solution:** A new category of insulation that combines heat and breathability in one form, and Patagonia's Nano-Air is at the cutting edge. Their proprietary FullRange insulation was the first that actually had testers sweating less and wearing the jacket more. "It thrives in the alpine where you're working hard to get to a route, then climbing and creating extra heat, followed by being still at belays in cold temps," said one tester who rocked it for a few months in the high mountains above Chamonix, France, as well as Rocky Mountain National Park and the Wind River Range in Wyoming. "It's not warmer than other jackets, but it is definitely more breathable, which means less adjusting on long approaches and long climbs." Another kick-ass feature of the jacket was its incredible level of stretch, which is a result of the mechanical properties of the weave of a 20-denier nylon outer that includes a DWR finish. It's a trim fit, but testers could reach up, out, backward, and every way around without the jacket shifting or raising up, increasing protection from the elements. Two hand-warmer pockets are higher and accessible when wearing a harness, a chest pocket holds sundries, and longer sleeves make it climber-worthy. But beware of offwidths, chimneys, or the errant ice axe. The material isn't designed to withstand assaults from sharps or high abrasion. **\$249–\$299; patagonia.**



Breathable insulation you'll never take off

GRIVEL TECH MACHINE

When testing this tool side by side with other high-end ice models at the 2014 Bozeman Ice Festival, one tester noticed the brilliant design immediately when the Tech Machine stuck faster and removed easier than any other tool. "I could always rely on this for a sturdy placement, and I never had to struggle to remove it, even with wonderfully deep sticks," she said. That's thanks to a thoughtful structure that combines a flatter (read: less curved) pick head with a curved shaft and the real kicker: a handle that's angled farther backward, meaning the wrist is naturally cocked back when holding the tool. What this does is put more leverage into every swing and into every time you lift the tool up to remove it. The less aggressive pick shape also helped to make extracting the ice tool faster and easier. "Putting the increased angle in the handle itself and not the shaft or pick is brilliant, as you get more leverage and swinging action with every move in or out of the ice." Chromolly steel throughout the tool means it's strong and durable, and a pointer finger rest provided a lot more precision for finding existing pick holes on delicate ice. The slight curve in the handle also made it more ergonomic and comfortable to hold.

\$250; libertymountain.com



Smart design for expert-level ice climbing

BÄM! BOARD

A compact training tool that progresses with you



There's a trade-off with the size of a hangboard: A small size usually means fewer holds and less training variety, while a large size has hold diversity but limits your options of where to hang it. The bäm board solves both problems with a super-small size (at 2' x 5", it's one of the smallest boards available) but a huge range of training options and levels. This is thanks to the variable edge and pocket depth and the customizable angle. Individual holds can be made shallower or deeper by a simple adjustment of some screws on the bottom of the board, while the entire unit has four different angle options, ranging

from 0° to 30°. Adjusted with a simple peg on each side, this feature is especially great when it comes to training slopers; with two different sloper holds and four angles, you basically get eight sloper holds. "This hangboard progresses with me; the more I train on it, the harder I can make it," one tester said of the high level of customization. "Plus, it's stealthy and inconspicuous in my tiny apartment." Serious hangboarders also loved the wood material, which made long sessions not only bearable but comfortable: "I can train on this way longer, thus getting way stronger, than plastic training tools."

\$149; bamclimbing.com

SCARPA FURIA

“World-class, mega-dank! Thanks to perfectly soft edges, Ryan Gosling in ‘The Notebook’ sensitivity, and a delightfully comfortable fit,” one tester said. So comfortable that he wore them on the 13-pitch *Yankee Clipper* (5.10b) in El Potrero Chico, Mexico, and was still grinning and singing after a full day of edging on micro-nubs. The same tester onsighted three 5.12s in the Furia at crags around Chattanooga, Tennessee, choosing them because of their versatility and performance on verticals, steepers, pockets, smedging, edges, slopers, and everything in between. The baby-fuzz softness comes from having no midsole, which famed shoe designer Heinz Mariacher removed to increase sensitivity and that supple feel. The midsole is also responsible for helping keep the aggressively downturned shape of a shoe, so instead Mariacher used a piece of tensioned rubber that runs from the ball of the foot to the front of the heel, called the PCB-Tension System (Power Connection Band). This piece of tensioned rubber (it’s stretched before being applied to the shoe) helps you transfer power directly into the toe. This means that your entire foot is working to help you edge on a dime, instead of just your toes. As the softest shoe in Scarpa’s line, the Furia is a versatile and surprisingly comfortable high-end rock shoe.

\$179; scarpa.com

**Soft, sensitive,
best-of-the-best
rock shoe**



BLACK DIAMOND PACK LINE

The 5 best climbing-specific gear haulers for every discipline



BULLET 16

STONE DUFFEL 42

STONE 45

CREEK 50

PIPE DREAM 45

This year we tested every new climbing pack that Black Diamond makes, and we loved them all. Each serves a specific purpose or perfectly suits a style of climbing. They're all well-built with thoughtful features, durable materials, and a comfortable carry. The Stone Duffel 42 is the classic duffel-style crag pack, with a top-to-bottom zipper on the outside for easy access, multiple drag and carry handles, and no external pockets for simplicity. Built for hauling serious loads, the aptly named Creek 50 carries a triple rack, rope, and tons of other gear with ease, thanks to a super-beefy padded suspension system and multiple organization features, including top and side access. With a completely unique design, the Pipe Dream 45 is constructed

with a thin layer of foam throughout the pack so you can unfold it and use it as a sit pad when resting between burns or as a padded landing zone when working your way to the first bolt. A removable top lid holds sundries without getting dirty from the ground. The Stone 45 is more of a standard pack, with full suspension, top-loading access, a lid, compression straps, and one important addition—a full-length side-access zipper that makes loading rack, helmet, harness, shoes, etc. much easier. Rounding out the line is the Bullet 16, the leader sack that more or less gave the category of “bullet packs” its name. The beauty comes in its simplicity: 16 liters of storage, two smaller pockets, thin but padded shoulder straps, and a webbing-only waist-belt and sternum strap. **\$55–\$190; blackdiamondequipment.com**

The Helios has been our go-to approach shoe since it came out two years ago, because it's light, cushy, nimble, and easy to take on and off between burns. Now, with the addition of sticky rubber to the sole, “It's my perfect all-purpose approach shoe. As a climber, the only other thing I could have wanted on the original Helios would have been sticky rubber, so this is kind of a dream come true,” one tester said. For the last few years, our testers have donned these super-light kicks for everything from five-mile slogs in Rocky Mountain National Park to bushwhacking in the Cascades to short jaunts to bouldering areas in the Southeast. “For couple-minute to couple-hour approaches, these are my favorite approach shoes—ever,” one seasoned tester said. “When I'm leaving on a road trip and I'm forced to pick one pair out of my arsenal of dozens, I always reach for the Helios.” With their proven performance, the Frixion rubber added to the sole only upped its applications: Testers romped on technical slabs in the Wind River Range, riverside boulders in Boulder Canyon, and root-laden trails in the South. They barely register on the scale at 16 oz. per pair, the mostly mesh upper is incredibly breathable, and the MorphoDynamic midsole offers plenty of support without compromising sensitivity, meaning you can still navigate technical terrain over long distances with no foot fatigue. Plus one: great for cross-training runs, too. **\$125; sportiva.com**

LA SPORTIVA HELIOS SR

Quiver-of-one approach shoe





PETZL HIRUNDOS

This lightweight harness has been a top pick for serious sport climbers for the last few years, and the complete overhaul for 2015 boosted its versatility and comfort. “I opted for the Hirundos on everything from hang-dogging my projects to all-day, dozen-pitch routes,” one tester said. This version gets extra cush and maintains a low weight and slim profile because of Petzl’s proprietary Fuseframe technology. Most harnesses have a webbing skeleton to provide strength with foam padding placed on top of that for comfort, but Fuseframe first shapes the foam to have special channels where the webbing will be placed. This means the webbing nests into the

foam, keeping it slender and lightweight but still easy to wear all day. This technology also fuses the outer fabric with the foam to better distribute pressure and eliminate hot spots, which no testers experienced, even on 13-pitch days with 10 rappels. Designers also upped durability and cut ounces by using Dyneema (synthetic material that’s lighter and stronger than nylon) in the tie-in points and the belay loop. One obsessed-over feature was the drop-leg with extra-large, easy-to-operate plastic buckles, meaning testers (especially ladies!) had delightfully fast access when nature called. Tester note: Sizing ran small, so opt for one size up when ordering.

\$100; petzl.com

PAT'S BACKCOUNTRY BEVERAGES



This sweet little setup is a specialized water bottle that lets you use any drinkable water you have on hand and turn it into beer—no more lugging 12 extra pounds to the crag or enduring that long car ride from the base to the brewery. Add water, throw in the carbonator tablet and flavor concentrate, shake it side to side, let it sit for a few minutes, and then drink up! “The Pail Rail competes with all of my favorite pale ales,” one beer snob tester said. “I can’t believe this came out of an energy

gel-size packet!” Pat’s uses a special hybrid brewing process that creates a beer with very little liquid content, so the beer “gel” in the packet acts as a concentrate that, once mixed, delivers higher alcohol content and smoother, more beer-like taste than previous dehydrated iterations of portable suds. Dark beer fans will flip over the Black Hops, and mixed drink-loving testers dug this setup to make classic soda cocktails. **\$50 (starter kit with carbonator bottle, activator packets, and 5 soda flavors), \$10 (4-pack of beer);** patsbcb.com

LA SPORTIVA GENIUS



Best of both worlds with a top-tier rock shoe

Building off the success of the Futura’s No-Edge technology, La Sportiva decided to put that rounded toe on a lace-up shoe with a heel similar to the time-tested Testarossa to create the aptly named Genius. “A perfect example of the final product being more than the sum of its parts, the Genius is just that: snug but comfortable, an aggressive downturn, and incredible performance on anything from vert to super-steep,” said one tester who took them for single-pitch trad at Tennessee Wall and sculpted sandstone boulders at Little Rock City, both near Chattanooga, Tennessee. The idea behind No-Edge is that climbing shoes that are at their broken-in sweet spot are actually blunt at the toe, instead of having a sharp, precise edge. This design skips the breaking-in period so you get a brand-new shoe that is ready to crush. The Genius has the same cushy mesh sock as the Solution, which lets you really crank on the laces to get a “freaking perfect fit,” and testers lauded the offset laces and extra rubber wrapped up over the front of the shoe to make the Genius really ideal for toe hooking and even foot jamming. The outside rubber also extends pretty far back, making back-stepping and drop-knees even easier. Ding: The high price, but this is definitely one of the best high-performance rock shoes on the market. **\$190;** sportiva.com

PETZL CIRRO

Smart, versatile crashpad

It’s not often that a new crashpad comes along and makes our diehard bouldering testers stop obsessing over their skin and say “Wow,” but the Cirro did just that. “The unique design of this mat put all others to shame,” one photographer-climber said after carrying upwards of 35 pounds at a time in the pad. The taco-style, hingeless setup (single fold with one section of foam) meant there were no dead spots in the middle, eliminating the fear of bottoming out and creating a uniform amount of support across the large surface area of the pad (58” x 46.5”). Designers also achieved a superb balance of rigidity and cush in the landing with their three-layer foam system that places two layers of closed-cell foam with different densities on top of the softer open-cell foam. This distributes the impact of landing and offers the right amount of squish. Across the board, testers loved



the full suspension system, with beefy, padded shoulder straps and waistbelt. The cherry on top was the foldover flap that closes the pad and prevents even the smallest brush from falling out, and then flips over when the pad is open to protect the carry system from getting muddy and gross. An additional single shoulder strap for short jaunts upped versatility. **\$399;** petzl.com

BELAGGLES BELAY GLASSES

Prevent
belayer's neck

The idea of specialized glasses designed for belaying has been around for a while, but none of the previous iterations are as comfortable, durable, and well-designed as the Belaggles specs. They work pretty simply: A prism in the place of a normal lens bends the light so you look straight ahead with your head and neck in a neutral position, but you can actually see what's above you. These glasses allow you to safely watch your climber while belaying, without wrenching your neck backward for long periods. "It's that cranked-up position that leads to belayer's neck, as well as aches and pains in daily life," one climbing-focused chiropractor points out, "so eliminating that position from your daily climbing repertoire lowers the probability that you'll have problems with your neck." Belaggles come with a nylon frame that's durable enough to stand a beating at the crag, and they're built so that if you do drop them, the frame or nose cap will hit first, not the prism. The rubber nose cap also meant testers could wear them for prolonged sessions without discomfort. Bonus: Each pair comes with a protective storage case, microfiber cloth for cleaning, and an eyewear retainer string. Here's a hint: Buy a pair to share with your climbing partner so he'll never have an excuse not to belay you again!

\$90; belaggles.com



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Tommy Caldwell
on The Dawn Wall



"I spent countless hours up there obsessing over my fingertips. Therefore, countless hours with my **climbOn Bar** in hand. I treat it kind of like a little kid treats their favorite stuffed animal...it's with me at all times and I'm in utter fear of losing it."

Tommy Caldwell on the Dawn Wall 12/27/2014-1/14/2015

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You only get 26,320 days, more or less. How will you spend them?

BOULDERING

Its the simplest form of climbing, and our 11 pebble-wrestling picks will keep you crushing.

Senior Editor Julie Ellison tests warm layers on a crimpy V4 on a 35°F day at Little Rock City, Tennessee.

METOLIUS FLOOR MAT

Small, lightweight shoe scuffer



File this under “didn’t know how much I needed one until I used it!” The FloorMat is a simple carpet square measuring 14.5” x 14.5” that’s designed for cleaning your shoes before climbing. “I was surprised by the difference in friction after I wiped my feet on this little fuzzy square; I sent pretty quickly once I started paying attention to this detail,” one tester said after sending *Captain Hook* (V9) in Boulder’s Satellites. Any dirt or grime on your rock shoes greatly reduces friction, so a few quick swipes on this mat can make sure you have optimal conditions for sending. Boulderers will find this endlessly useful, and so will sport climbers, who don’t have crashpads to walk on top of at the base of their project. It’s smaller, lighter, and more portable than a random piece of carpet make this worth the purchase. Clip it on the outside of your pack with the dedicated grommet and go crush.

\$8; metoliusclimbing.com

TECH TIPS: BOULDERING PAD PARTIES



One of the best parts of bouldering is the social aspect. Unlike roped climbing, where you spend a majority of time away from your partner and other climbers, bouldering puts you right there next to fellow crushers. Because of this, there will be plenty of times that you’re throwing your pads down with another group’s, moving and restacking them to create the best landing possible—what we affectionately call a pad party. The biggest rule is to communicate what you’ll be doing, e.g., ask before moving someone else’s pad, politely request to join the pad party (a simple “mind if we try this problem with you?” will do), calmly suggest a reorganization of the pads, and help rearrange the remaining pads once you’ve removed yours. Try to avoid walking on all the pads with muddy shoes, and never ever just grab your pad and leave when someone is trying the problem!



LA SPORTIVA GENIUS

NO-EDGE TECHNOLOGY ON A VERSATILE LACE-UP

Precision performance in a comfortable, well-designed lace-up for one of the year’s best high-end shoes. Keep reading on page 28.

PETZL CIRRO

COMFORTABLE-CARRY CRASHPAD

You’ll find attention to detail and climber-friendly features on this large crashpad that strikes a perfect balance of sturdiness and cush in an easy-to-carry package. More on page 28.

KINETIK KILOJOULE



Massive, spill-free chalk pot

What’s the #1 climbing gear oxymoron? Chalk-bag innovation. Or it used to be, until Kinetik shattered that notion with the Kilojoule. Two full-coverage flaps on top overlap with perpendicular openings to keep chalk in, but those same flaps stretch quite easily when you slide your hand in to grab chalk. “It’s impossible to spill this chalk pot,” one tester said after throwing, kicking, and tossing it all around the gym and at various boulderfields. “But it’s much easier to actually get to the chalk than other spill-proof systems.” Plus, the clam-shell design makes it really portable without sacrificing a huge chalk capacity: “It goes from monster chalk bucket that holds months worth of the white powder to slim-profile torpedo that slides right in my pack with one quick zip.” It’s made of very burly 1,000-denier nylon, with a wider base that keeps it incredibly stable. Sweetness: Customize your color for a personalized pot. **\$33 (standard), \$38 (customized); kinetikclimbing.com**



Despite the rain, photographer Alton Richardson finds the overhanging Croc Boulder perfect to play on in Rocktown, Georgia.

Train longer and harder
with comfortable grips

ESCAPE CLIMBING WOOD TRAINING TOOLS



Escape Climbing's arsenal of wooden equipment will train your muscles without tearing up your skin. We loved the Power Balls (pictured) and the Power Pistons, which both provided a way to train for pull-ups that focuses on grip strength (pinches and open-hand) as well as major pulling muscles. The Power Balls are great for sloper training, and at a diameter of 3", they allowed small-handed testers to zero in on improving their open-hand grip. The Campus Pipes are a solid alternative to normal campus rungs, which are usually either too-easy jugs or injury-risking crimps. All products are made of ash, which is durable enough to last a lifetime but soft enough to be pleasant on hands. **\$22–\$96; escapeclimbing.com**

TECH TIPS: BOULDERING BRUSHING



Holds on well-traveled climbs can get a buildup of excess

chalk, body oils, dirt, and even rubber from shoes, so it's important to brush that gunk away for better purchase. The soft, fine bristles of a boar's hair brush are best. Brush in small circles and blow the dust away every few seconds so you're not just grinding it in deeper. A note on etiquette: Don't get on a climb right after someone has brushed it. Wait until they've been able to try it once or twice and then ask if they mind if you give it a go. Attain extra karma points by brushing a problem before and after you do it, and always remove tick marks.

METOLIUS GYM BAG



SIMPLE GYM CARRIER

"This strikes the perfect balance between my super-teched-out crag pack, which seems like overkill for the gym, and a grocery tote, which is what I've used for years," one tester said after a winter of gym sessions. The 28-liter capacity is just enough for a few pairs of shoes, harness, belay device, water bottle, change of clothes, and a 30-meter gym rope, with sundries pockets on the outside for phone, keys, and wallet. Commute by bike using the single padded shoulder strap, and then drag it from route to route with the top carry handles. A full-length zipper gives complete access to the bag, so it's easy to load and unload gear—or just leave everything in there to grab and go. **\$30; metoliusclimbing.com**

FRICTION LABS CHALK



THE DRIEST CHALK OUT THERE

Aptly named Friction Labs is on a mission to convince climbers that all chalk is not created equal, and after our testers dipped into it, they wholeheartedly agreed. "This is the first chalk I've used that was noticeably different than other brands—my hands were drier and I wasn't rechalking nearly as much," one sweaty-palmed tester said after a muggy and rain-soaked trip to Chattanooga, Tennessee. Friction Labs has way more magnesium carbonate, which keeps you drier than the less expensive calcium carbonate filler, than other brands. It's a good bit more expensive, but totally worth it. Awesomesauce: Get a monthly subscription so you're always fully stocked. **\$8 (2.5 oz., free shipping); frictionlabs.com**

ORGANIC BLUBBER PAD



SMOOTH OUT LANDING ZONES

All boulderers fear and loathe the dead spots between crashpads. The Blubber Pad, essentially a thinner, more flexible crashpad, is designed to ease your mind, smooth your landing zones, and cover up mud or snow on the fringe of your pad puzzle. It covers a super-large area—48" x 72"—and with 3/4" thickness, it's perfect to double as a sleeping pad wherever you might be laying your head at night. It folds up to 36" x 24" x 4" and though it doesn't come with its own carry system, but you can easily strap it inside or on the outside of another pad—it's also designed to fit snugly under the flap on Organic's larger pads. Get extra safety without a lot of extra weight (8 lbs.). **\$120; organicclimbing.com**

TRICAM EVO



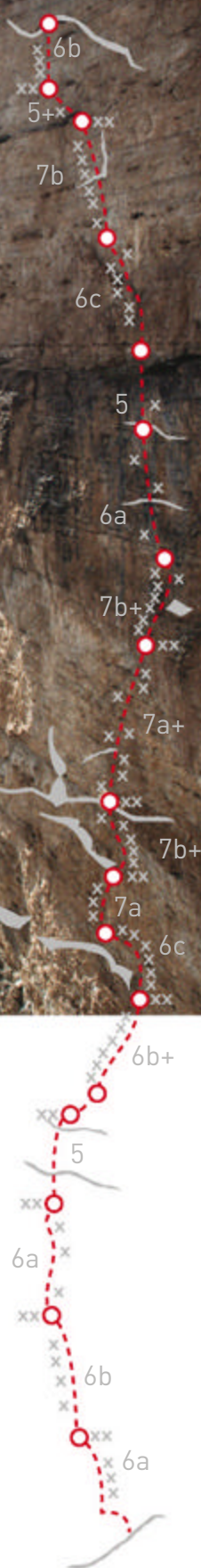
Icon ... Improved. All new design provides 3 placement possibilities (active cam + 2 passive chocks).



Updated stitching pattern increases the rigidity of the sling for easier placements and extraction.



Available in the four most popular sizes (0.25 – 1.5).



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CLIMB X TRIPLE X CRASHPAD

Easy carry,
huge landing
surface



“This massive mat feels small and fairly insignificant on your back,” one tester praised after lugging it throughout the West, including Boulder’s Flatirons and Bishop, California. Credit the triple-fold design that has two hinges, meaning it lies large but folds up quite narrow. The open size is 72” x 44” x 5” (even 6’ testers were more than happy to use this as a bed), while the closed size is 24” x 44” x 15”, which made bushwhacking to find boulders and squeezing between trees nice and straightforward. A stable and easy-to-wear suspension system made long slogs to alpine areas enjoyable for even small-framed testers, the combination open- and closed-cell foams had just the right amount of rigidity and softness, and multiple drag handles made rearranging the landing easy. Then for après-climb, hook a few buckles and enjoy the pad as a couch. **\$230; climbxgear.com**

BETA BALM



MIRACULOUS SKIN HEALER

On a staff trip to Chattanooga, Tennessee, one of our testers needed some salve to treat his raw tips, so he bought a tin of Beta Balm from The Crash Pad, the area’s super-rad climber hostel. His tips were fine by morning, so we all had to borrow some. The secret? Mango butter. It’s similar to cocoa butter when it comes to moisturizing, without that heavy, sticky feeling that other “butters” have. It also contains vitamins A, C, and E, and the various other oils (e.g., shea nut, walnut, babassu) have protective, soothing, and moisturizing properties, including helping with inflammation. “I can put this on my wrecked hands, tips, and knuckles at night, knowing that I’ll wake up the next morning ready to slap even the grittiest sandstone the South has to offer.” **\$13; bulksoapcompany.com**

BÄM! BOARD



HUGE TRAINING VARIETY

Change the angle of the whole board and the depth of individual holds. More on page 24.



Local Chattanooga climber Todd Clark shows us how to dyno on the one-move wonder *Castaway* (V7), Little Rock City, Tennessee.

Nils Favre / Namibia / Le Dammé FA 5.13c ● J. Wörz

BE BOLD
www.millet.fr

MILLET ROC SESSION series


Exploring life off the beaten path – that is the Millet spirit. Throughout the anticipation on approach, the wonderfully grueling climb, or the high of accomplishment, we're right there with you. Millet's Rockland pack and Jackspire hoodie – just two examples of Millet gear, precisely engineered to help you reach the top.





HIRUNDOS

High-performance and lightweight,
for freedom on the hardest moves.



A rarely climbed gem of Southeast bolt-clipping: Grace's Buckets (5.11d), Graces Falls, Little River Canyon, Alabama.

SPORT

Big falls and big sends characterize the bolt-clipping end of the climbing spectrum. Here are 21 products created for the sport crag.



Phenomenal handling

STERLING EVOLUTION AERO

After three months of use, testers were still swooning over this new 9.2mm rope in Sterling's Evolution line. "This rope is AMAZING. I've never used a rope that I liked more than this," said one hard-to-please tester after a season climbing in the Red River Gorge, Kentucky. The Aero fed exceptionally but still caught well on both assisted-braking and tube-style belay devices, with a smooth ride through gear and low weight for redpointing (56 g/m equals 8.6 lbs. for the 70m version). One tester ranked this a 9.5 out of 10, and it's one of the best-handling ropes we've used; it knots and unties easily and has a nice amount of flexibility, but it never fuzzed up or showed any signs of wear after more than 50 pitches. **\$199 (60m); sterlingrope.com**

TECH TIPS: SPORT VISUALIZING



When working a long-term project, take the

time—right before climbing, lying in bed before you fall asleep, on the drive—to mentally picture yourself on the route. Visualize every move, hold, and rest, and imagine yourself finding a nice flow, breathing evenly, and topping out with a big smile on your face. It's been proven that visualization helps climbers make fewer and shorter stops while moving up a route, which can come in handy when the pump-clock is ticking and you're fighting your way to the chains. This technique also helps you stay calm and focused because your brain and body know what's coming next.

PATAGONIA CRAGSMITH 35

This midsize pack has smart organization and thoughtful features to hold everything you need and nothing you don't. It's got two main access points: top-loading and a clamshell rear entry that opens up the entire backpanel, which makes for fast and easy loading and unloading. The pack lies with the outside down, preventing the back from getting dirty and transferring the muck to you. The interior holds 35 liters, enough for a day of climbing, with a rope strap on top. Guidebook and zipper pockets round out the "best minimalist features I've seen." **\$129; patagonia.com**

Perfectly sized and organized crag pack



MAD ROCK REDLINE SHOES



OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

"Anybody that climbs vertical to overhanging will love this shoe." With one of the best heel designs we've seen in years, testers lauded the Heel Clutch, which is a piece of rubber that wraps around the entire back of the foot and connects directly to the laces, so cranking down on them tightens the rear of the shoe just as much. A roomy toe box made these easier to wear than other high-end kicks, and the unique molded compression tongue was comfortable and soft against skin, connecting to the sole to add another locking system to keep your foot in place but not jammed.

\$169; madrockclimbing.com



PETZL HIRUNDOS

WINNING UPDATES TO FAVE HARNESS

This famed sport climbing harness underwent a complete overhaul, so now it's twice as comfortable with more functionality—and weighs almost 2 oz. less. See more on page 27.

BELAGGLES BELAY GLASSES

BYE BYE BELAYER'S NECK

Be a better belayer and prevent neck pain with these durable, smartly designed, and easy-to-wear belay glasses. Full review on page 29.

Senior Editor Julie Ellison tests the Petzl Hirundos harness on "one of the most sandbagged routes ever," aka *Twist and Shout* (5.9+), Foster Falls, Tennessee.



CAMP MATIK



ASSISTED-BRAKING DEVICE WITH INCREASED SAFETY

The camming action of this assisted-braking belay device (meaning it will add stopping power when you catch a fall) is a gradual motion, which reduces the impact forces. This means less wear and tear on the anchor and rope. Testers found it also meant softer overall catches, even with minimal rope out. The Matik sports an "anti-panic function" in the lowering lever, meaning if you crank it back too far, instead of the device locking open, this function will engage and stop the rope moving through the device altogether—a feature that also ups the safety. A wide attachment point allows even large locking belay biners to full rotate through the hole, so you don't have to fiddle and flip biners around to clip and unclip the device from your harness. Dings: Slightly heavy at 9.7 oz., and pricey. **\$200; camp-usa.com**

LA SPORTIVA HELIOS SR



JUST ADD STICKY RUBBER

The favorite ultra-light, breathable, and comfortable trailrunner-meets-approach shoe gets an upgrade with sticky Frixion rubber on the sole. Go to page 26 for more.

EVOLV LUCHADOR



Awesomely affordable performance on overhangs

With an aggressive downturn, the Luchador (named after the term for a Mexican wrestler) was built for steep climbing, and it acted like a "hook" on overhangs by grabbing pockets and small nubbins. The asymmetric toe offers great precision on small feet, and the stiffness transfers power from the back of the foot through to the toe, meaning you climb with your whole foot and not just your tootsies. To-the-toe lacing combined with a mesh, padded sock vacuum-seal a fit that's snug but still comfortable, and the Velcro version has three straps that lock the whole foot down. Proprietary VTR randing places more rubber in high-wear spots to greatly increase the lifespan of the shoe, so even climbers with bad footwork can rely on these for a long time. "Great rubber, excellent fit, and an aggressive shape make these an ace for overhangs."

\$139; evolvsports.com

TECH TIPS: SPORT 3 ESSENTIAL UPPER BODY STRETCHES



Avoid tight, sore muscles with post-session stretches.

Gate Pose: Kneel with one leg out to the side. Keep it straight, pointing toes to the side. Place arm on that same side on your shin. Reach over your head with your opposite hand, looking up with your head.

Standing Bend with Shoulder Stretch: While standing, squeeze shoulders together and clasp hands palm to palm behind you. Keep elbows straight. Slowly bend forward as your arms go over your head.

Plow Pose: On your back, lift straight legs up over your head with arms flat and palms on the floor. Rest on your shoulders, neck, and head and try to touch the ground with your toes.

BLACK DIAMOND SUPER CHUTE ROPE BAG



EASIEST-LOADING CORD CARRIER

Various rope haulers "funnel" the rope into the bag, but none of those were as easy and fast to operate as the Super Chute. The tarp was out to the side (instead of surrounding the bag in the middle like others) and attached to the bag, but it tapered toward the bag, so it acted like a chute. "Imagine a rope going down a children's slide," one tester said. "It's that easy to prevent errant coils." Red and green loops delineate top and bottom, and a 57" x 49" landing area is plenty for 80-meter ropes. Con: No handle on all four corners meant moving from route to route wasn't quite as easy. **\$45; blackdiamondequipment.com**

CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY



EAGLE LIGHT 9.5 MM

The most versatile rope in the EDELRID collection. Destined to become a classic.

www.edelridna.com

EDELWEISS SCORPION

Typical sport-specific harnesses have fixed leg loops, meaning they aren't adjustable; this saves weight by eliminating a metal buckle on each loop. The Scorpion saves the weight of two extra metal buckles but increases the adjustability over even most all-around rigs with a unique system. Designers placed two plastic buckles on each leg loop, meaning you can slide them down or up, tightening one side or another to truly fine-tune fit. "This is the first harness, fixed leg loops or not, that I never had to fiddle with leg loops riding up or getting uncomfortably crammed between my legs," one tester said after a few uses in a local gym. A wide waistbelt spreads pressure out for big whips and hang-dogging, and four plastic gear loops are large and articulated away from the body, making desperate "don't fall, don't fall" clips faster and easier. **\$75; libertymountain.com**

Fully adjustable sport harness



NATIVE APOLLO MOC



SLIMMED-DOWN CRAG COMFORT

Sometimes you don't need the most technical approach shoe to get to a crag that's a stone's throw from the road, but you still want some foot protection and pure cush for the time between burns. That's where the Apollo Moc shines. "It's like a lightweight trailrunner turned into a slip-on," one tester said after rocking them for the short approaches in El Potrero Chico, Mexico, and throughout the Front Range of Colorado. The microfiber upper "wraps bare feet in a cloud," and breathability is at a maximum thanks to perforations, keeping feet dry and noses happy by preventing stink. The shock-absorbing EVA foam outsole is "hands-down the most comfortable footbed I've ever walked on—right out of the box," and low-profile lugs offer excellent traction on rock, trail, and dirt. A simple lace latches down fit for the approach, and the slip-on design makes the constant on-off of sport climbing a breeze. **\$70; nativeshoes.com**

PETZL VOLTA 9.2



FERRARI OF SKINNY ROPES

"This made me feel like I was driving a Porsche when I'm used to driving a Camry," one tester said about this high-end cord compared to his other mid-9mm ropes. "It clips smoother than Al Green sings, knots like a champ, and goes through all belay devices like water through a pipe." Petzl uses EverFlex, applying heat to improve the consistency of each strand in the core, which leads to better handling and reliable performance. The Duratec dry treatment not only provides water resistance, but also creates a finish on the outside of the rope that keeps it running snag-free; this treatment also repelled dirt, which can be the real rope killer. **\$245 (60m); petzl.com**

METOLIUS BRAVO KEYLOCK QUICKDRAW



BALANCED WORKHORSE DRAW

Your everyday draw should have the right amount of great performance and durability, with a design that's built to take a beating. The 6" Bravo Keylock draw is just that, with a pleasing price tag about \$4 less than comparable draws. "After clipping these 100+ times, I'm still smitten," one tester said after taking them on a sport climbing tour of the Northwest, South Dakota, and Kentucky. "The 1" webbing is a great size for grabbing during last-ditch clips, and a keylock draw on top clips bolts perfectly while the wire gate on bottom receives the rope flawlessly while saving some weight." At 3.1 oz. each, a rack of 10 is less than 2 lbs. **\$19; metoliusclimbing.com**

TECH TIPS: SPORT

PROTOCOL FOR LARGE PARTIES



It can be super-fun to go cragging with a big group—as long as you're in the group. If

you're the unlucky team of two sharing a crag with huge parties of five or more, it can be rowdy, noisy, annoying, and just plain frustrating. A few do's and don'ts if you're in a big group: Do your best to be courteous, even if that means trying to quiet your loud friend Frank and then apologizing profusely for his inappropriate behavior. Do try to separate into smaller teams of two or three. Don't be loud—no yelling to your buddy who is 100 feet away and no loud music. Don't siege routes: If you set up a toprope, make sure someone is always climbing on it, and offer other climbers the chance to use it and/or your draws that are already hanging; never leave a rope hanging and unattended.



BLACK DIAMOND STONE DUFFEL 42

SIMPLISTIC, CRAG-PERFECT PACK

This straightforward cragging hauler offers a duffel-style zipper for full access to gear inside, ample storage room, a large rope tarp, a comfortable carry, and it provides a great staging area to prevent crag yard sales. Visit page 26 for more.

shoes gear accessories

CLIMB X



Rave
retail: \$69.95



Redpoint
retail: \$79.95



Rock-It
retail: \$99.95



Technician
retail: \$89.95

CLIMB X

ClimbXGear.com
info@ClimbXGear.com
503.929.5360

Team Representative: Sierra Coyle

METOLIUS SPORT GLOVE

Belay gloves are an excellent option for protecting your mitts, but they also offer increased grip for big catches. Of course, that extra purchase is compromised if your hands are sweating buckets on the inside. Enter the Sport Glove, a paw-protector that offers a great balance of airflow through the glove—preventing sweat buildup and durability where you need it. Goatskin covers the palm and fingertips while a stretchy nylon covers the back of the hand. “I feel like a better, more confident belayer with these, even when I’m catching my boyfriend who outweighs me by 40 lbs.,” one tester said. “Plus, they never get crusty or uncomfortable like my full-leather gloves do.” Good idea: Five sizes let you find a great fit, and the dirtbag-appropriate price is nice. **\$23; metoliusclimbing.com**



HANCHOR BALLOON SUL



Cutting weight can be a priority for hard red-pointing, and this new chalk carrier from the Chinese company Hanchor just set the bar really high—well, low actually. Hanchor is known for innovations in ultra-light backpacking, and they’ve taken that design mentality and applied it to a climber’s essential. This full-size chalkbag weighs in at an amazing 0.6 oz. (empty), without sacrificing the details or performance of a standard chalkbag. The large opening allowed climbers with small and large hands to go in for a quick dip without snags. Made of high-tech and ultra-light Cuben Fiber fabric, the Balloon is incredibly durable, and the waistbelt is an equally strong and light Dyneema cord. It’s excellent for long routes when saving every ounce counts, but one tester found it particularly stood out for travel: “I can pack this in a small pocket or a climbing shoe when I need every inch of my duffel for other gear.” **\$41 (free worldwide shipping); hanchor.com**

SCARPA FURIA



SOFT AND SENSITIVE PERFORMANCE

Get ultimate functionality and versatility with this super-soft and super-sensitive rock shoe that flexes for slabs, edges on pockets, and toes in on steep—while being “pretty damn comfortable to wear on long routes.” More info on page 25.

BLACK DIAMOND PIPE DREAM 45 PACK

PACK MEETS CRASHPAD
Make a day of cragging more fun thanks to a unique design, easy carry, and smart features. The pack can be unfolded into a padded, “super-comfy chill spot.” See review on page 26.

BLACK DIAMOND BULLET 16

BEAUTIFULLY SIMPLE LEADER PACK

“Panel-loading minimalist that was a pleasure to wear while climbing,” with a large main compartment and two smaller pockets. Review on page 26.

SALEWA WILDFIRE PRO GTX

Dominate
technical
approaches



Easily transition from hiking to climbing in these burly but breathable kicks from the cobblers at Salewa. "I've never had such technically minded shoes be so comfy right out of the box," one tester said after stomping through puddles during a wet week of climbing in the Southeast. The burly outer stood up to a barrage of scree and talus at various alpine areas in Utah, protecting the toes and the top of the foot, and they performed well on fourth and fifth class. "Don these whenever the trail is questionable," one tester suggested. "They're light enough to feel comfortable anywhere, but supportive and protective enough to let you go off-trail with reckless abandon." Multiple footbed options meant low-volume and high-volume feet were happy, and the Gore-Tex kept testers' dogs completely dry in very wet conditions. **\$200; salewa.com**

EDELRID TOPAZ 9.2

BURLY BUT SKINNY

Get the durability of a 9.5mm workhorse in a smooth and supple 9.2mm cord that hits many sweet spots for today's obsessed sport cragger. "We're not in superlight territory, but far from heavy weight," said one Front Range, Colorado tester. "I consider it a multipurpose dream, and it's the rope I grab most often."

The secret sauce is the exceptionally tight weave of the sheath, which boosts both abrasion resistance and "hand" or how it feels while using it.

Testers universally praised how feature rich the rope is. Dry

treatment? Check. Dual

weave to mark the middle? Check. Extra credit:

The Topaz is triple-rated for single, half, and twin use, if that strikes your fancy. **\$240 (70m);**

scarpa.com/edelrid



ESCAPE

escapeclimbing.com



Shannon Davis tests multiple layers in 20° temps on *Ankles Away* (5.9+) at Foster Falls, Tennessee.



Theodolite

Pro-grade navigation, survey, and exploration tool. Multi-function viewfinder with compass, GPS, inclinometers, rangefinder, maps, nav calculator, data sharing, and geo-tag photo/movie camera.



Pro Altimeter

Highly accurate barometric altimeter with calibration. For iPhone 6/6+ and iPad Air 2.



Apps for Outdoor Adventures



Pro Compass

Military-style pocket transit with degrees and mils, GPS, MGRS, UTM, inclinometers, and maps.



Nav Camera

Versatile field camera with data overlay – create photos and movies in any orientation, with text overlays that include geo location, date, time, compass direction, and customized notes.

Learn more at HRTapps.com or visit the iTunes App Store

Gear tester Paul Creme samples the tight finger jams on *Digital Macabre* (5.10b), Tennessee Wall.





TRAD

**From the newest cams to the best packs,
here are 11 of our favorite new products
for the gear-plugging crowd.**



MOUNTAIN TOOLS LAZY DAZY

Adjustable daisy chains are usually reserved for aid climbing, big walling, and huge alpine routes, but the Lazy Dazy showed its versatility with sport and trad multi-pitch lines. One tester loved it so much he rocked it for cleaning sport routes: “I could dial in the exact distance I needed from the anchor, without worrying about clipping, unclipping, etc.” For aiding through sections, testers could easily lengthen it by squeezing the cam buckle, located conveniently close to the bar-tacked loop used for clipping to gear, and pulling the webbing through. This version of a longstanding favorite tool is very lightweight at only 5.4 oz., and testers found it more durable than adjustable daisies of the past: “No more throwing a ‘new’ daisy chain away after one big wall.” Manufacturer’s specs also say that the Lazy Dazy has a greater overall strength than other brands at about 3,330 lbs.

\$23; mntntools.com

EDELRID SHIELD II

ULTRA-LIGHT WITH AMPLE PROTECTION

Barely there helmets might be all the rage in the gear world, but now they’re so light that it feels like you might as well be wearing an eggshell on your noggin. The Shield II is a brain bucket that strikes the perfect balance between weight and confidence inspiring construction. Weighing in at 8.7 oz. for the smaller size (48–56cm, large is 52–62cm and 9.7 oz.), the Shield II is “comfortable to wear for 10 hours at a time thanks to maximum ventilation and breathability combined with a perfectly shaped interior and ample padding in all the right places.” From getting bombed by tiny pebbles at Telluride, Colorado’s conglomerate Pipeline Wall to tramping around the French Alps, testers with large and small domes alike lauded the helmet’s Wing-Fit system, which combines an ergonomic wing shape across a larger contact area with your skull. This meant it stayed in place without having to crank the adjustment dial all the way down. Expanded polystyrene foam and a polycarbonate shell provide ample protection, and a completely adjustable chin strap lets you fine-tune fit.

\$85; scarpa.com/edelrid



CYPHER SENTINEL



FULL-PROTECTION, COMFORTABLE HIGH-TOPS

Designed with long routes, crack climbing, and standing on your feet all day in mind, the Sentinel is the trad climber’s best friend. Not only does the high-top protect ankles from scrapes and scratches—with light padding for extra comfort—it provides extra support (“especially great on long crack pitches!”) for full days on your feet. The edging capabilities of this shoe were world-class, thanks to a flat rand and a stiff sole, which wasn’t so stiff that it limited sensitivity for precise edging on the East Buttress (5.10c) of Middle Cathedral in Yosemite. Rubber high on the toe increased stickiness when scumming and back-stepping; plus, it kept laces out of the way for jamming. Bonus: They’re a solid \$40 cheaper than comparable kicks. **\$130; cypherclimbing.com**



Various twin-gate biners have been on the market for several years, but testers found this D-shaped carabiner with a combo wire and keylock gate to be the easiest to clip on the fly. Instead of using a locker on crucial clips (traverse, first bolt, etc.), which might require two hands to use, a twin-gate is easier to operate with one hand and lighter in some cases. Testers in Eldorado Canyon, Colorado, found that the Sigma was super-simple to clip, thanks to the extra lip and grip of the wire gate, which was smartly placed outside the keylock. “The wire is fast to open with one finger, and then use a second finger to push the rope through the curved keylock, just like a nonlocker.” The Sigma has a very high closed-gate strength rating at 30 kN, but its weight is still airy at only 2 oz. **\$16; libertymountain.com**

GRIVEL SIGMA K8G

Climbing editor Shannon Davis ends a big runout in the ultra-fun corner Nutrasweet (5.7), Tennessee Wall.



FIXE ALIEN EVO LITE



This classic cam has been a trad climber's favorite for decades because of its extremely flexible stem and narrow head width that fits magically in parallel cracks and pin scars alike, and now it gets a modern overhaul. Designers reduced the head profile by a whopping 20%, but still managed to make the unit stronger with new sling material, manufactured by Roca Ropes in Spain. The former means it fits even more placements without sacrificing safety and holding power. Replacing the old aluminum trigger configuration with plastic molded parts meant testers had way better grip and easier placing, and the plastic thumb loop helped with precision on reachy placements. These new plastic parts also help cut weight, too—up to .75 oz. on a few models, and they're available with a doubled sling for multiple extension options. The best part? They're still the same price. **\$68; fixehardware.com**

TECH TIPS: TRAD

SLING YOUR CHALKBAG



You might not consider your chalkbag a crucial part of your rack, but it can be. Simply change out the included non-strength-rated webbing waistbelt with a piece of cordelette or single-length sling. This is a genius way to add another full-strength extender or part of a rappel anchor into your rack without making it feel like you're carrying anything extra. In a pinch you can grab it and build an anchor, extend a piece of gear, or use it as a personal anchor tether.

WILD COUNTRY SUPERLIGHT OFFSET ROCKS



TRIPLE PLACEMENT OPTIONS WITH MINIMAL WEIGHT

"The beauty of passive pro is its weight-to-placement ratio—a wide variety of placements compared to few ounces—and these are a shining example," one tester said. "They're asymmetrical so funky fissures eat them up." The weight savings came in handy on all-day routes, when trading a few offset cams for these cut the rack by almost a pound. The idea came about when a Wild Country employee took the original curved Rock and cut it in half. Designers changed the angles on the sides (one is 3°, one is 9°) for a different taper and width; they also lightened up the wire, for a product that's about 40% lighter than the original. **\$70; wildcountry.com**

SCARPA VAPOR V SHOE



Versatile high-performance rock shoe

"It's perfect precision without pain," one tester said after taking them around the Sierra's Eastside, clipping bolts, plugging gear, and bouldering. "It feels like my foot is being pulled toward the heel, rather than shoving my foot forward and cramming my toes in. They have more room, yet focused power." That's thanks to the Bi-Tension Randing that pre-stretches rubber and then wraps it under the ball of the foot and up on both sides back toward the heel and underneath the ankle. An ultra-thin, full-length midsole offers more support and less foot fatigue than other high-performance shoes, making them "awesome for long, techy routes." A slight downturn and dual Velcro straps make these a perfect choice for gym, bouldering, sport, and trad. **\$159; scarpa.com**

Perpetuate Better Living

**“Sun’s set. Light’s gone.
Quitting time.”**

—HagePhoto, Chugach National Forest, Alaska



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INDEPENDENTLY OWNED • COMMUNITY DRIVEN
NINKASI BREWING COMPANY
EUGENE, OREGON

ARC'TERYX ALPHA FL

Burly, one-of-a-kind approach shoe



Talk a bout a unique setup! A beefy, laminated (no stitching) outer encases a sock-like liner to create a burly, blister-free ride. Arc'teryx calls it Adaptive Fit, and our testers liked the custom-fit feel. After wearing them right out of the box for scrambling in the high peaks of Colorado and the Northeast, testers never had a single blister, and one called them "super-comfortable and surprisingly moldable to my long and skinny foot." The climbing zone beneath

the forefoot is flat for edging precision, but it offered more grip on uneven surfaces and wet trails thanks to small grooves throughout. Dot rubber and lugs in the heel round out the holy trinity of trail, edge, and rock purchase. The Alpha FL's liner isn't waterproof or removable, but the pricier Alpha² offers GTX and insulated options for removable, washable liners (sold separately). Ding: Some testers said these shoes felt "clunky" on technical approaches. **\$190 (non-GTX), \$220 (GTX); arcteryx.com**

BLACK DIAMOND CREEK 50



COMFY CARRY-ALL HAULER

One tester easily carried more than 50 lbs. of camera gear, a triple rack, rope, personal climbing gear, food, and water, saying, "Thanks to a huge capacity, tailored organization, and perfect suspension, I wasn't even pushing its limits." Review on page 26.

STERLING EVOLUTION HELIX 9.5



FLEXIBLE-FEEL WORKHORSE ROPE

"One rope to rule them all" is how one tester described this new medium-width cord from Sterling. After testing at Boulder Canyon, Colorado, and Foster Falls, Chattanooga, he noted that it handled like a skinnier rope despite its heft. "It knots and clips like a thinner cord, but in a standard tube-style belay device, it performed like a fatter one, making it really easy to catch a fall. Plus, it gave premium lowering control, even with heavier climbers." This makes it a great intermediate between your go-to sending cord and the rope you use everyday. "Actually, it could replace both ropes!" Six months of testing at sport, trad, and ice crags didn't cause any fuzzing whatsoever, thanks to a new thicker sheath, and at 59 g/m, it's just more than 9 lbs. for the 70-meter version. **\$213 (60m); sterlingrope.com**

CAMP ENERGY



WALLET-FRIENDLY, ALL-AROUND HARNESS

With a harness that's as lightweight (11 oz.), versatile, comfortable, and feature-laden as the Energy, you might expect a price that's twice as high as this budget-friendly rig's \$50 tag. "You could have told me this was \$90 or higher, and I wouldn't have blinked," one tester said after wearing it for big whips at Foster Falls, Tennessee, and Little River Canyon, Alabama. "Whether I'm packing draws, a rack, or screws, this is my quiver-of-one harness." Thermo-molded padding customizes the fit to your legs and waist, and with wide straps, the pressure and weight is distributed over a larger surface to eliminate pressure points. Testers loved the plastic-covered gear loops that were stiff enough to make racking and organizing on the go quite easy. **\$50; camp-usa.com**

TECH TIPS: TRAD MARKING GEAR



Color-code your gear with a unique "tag," so you can easily separate your draws, cams, nuts, and biners from your friends'.

It's especially crucial for Indian Creek aficionados who might need to borrow from three or four people to get enough No. 2 cams for that one splitter crack. Two main options exist: tape or nail polish. Tape works fine; use a unique color combination (blue and green, red and pink) or find tape with patterns. Position tape in an area that won't see much abrasion (stem of a cam, spine of a biner). Nail polish allows you to place it in more inconspicuous locations (head of a cam between the lobes), so it will last much longer. Just make sure to use a small swath or dot and a personalized color combo. Never put polish on slings or soft goods, but taping these items is OK.

MOUNTAIN STANDARD


COLORADO




MS017 STANDARD 1/4 ZIP FLEECE SHIRT
WWW.MOUNTAINSTANDARD.COM
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 Rab®

 Rab Athlete Scott Adamson wearing the Muztag Jacket and Calibre Pants on a recent "Reverse Canyoneering" trip to Zion, UT. The ice in Zion does not last long, but the amount of ice in the area is impressive. IMAGE: JEREMIAH WATT

www.rabusa.com 
@rab_usa.com

ALPINE

Weight, versatility, durability, and weather resistance are of the utmost importance in the high country. Here are 12 products that meet and beat all the requirements.

Erik Leidecker and Mason Earle put gear to the test on the ultimate crash course: *Northeast Ridge* (5.8), Bugaboo Spire, Bugaboos, Canada.



BLACK DIAMOND STONE 45



COMFY FULL-ACCESS PACK

The well-built suspension system offers stability and comfort on approaches without adding too much weight to the total package, and a side-access zipper doubles ease of use. More on page 26.

TRANGO CATALYST 9.0

We filed this under alpine because of its top-notch dry finish, light weight, and safety-increasing Unicore technology, but don't pigeonhole this cord. Our testers used it for redpoint burns in Smith Rock, Oregon, then long routes in El Potrero Chico, Mexico, followed by five-pitch trad climbs in Eldorado Canyon, Colorado. "There's nothing this rope doesn't do really, really well," one tester said. "Clips like butter, knots perfectly, unties easily, stands up to abrasion—shall I keep going?" It has one of the highest fall ratings for a rope of this diameter (7 UIAA falls), and at 55 g/m, it weighs in at 8.5 lbs. for the 70-meter version. The Duo Dry finish proved to be incredibly water resistant at drippy ice crags in Vail, Colorado. Certified for single, half (aka double), and twin use, this is the cord for you—no matter your chosen disciplines. **\$260 (70m); trango.com**

TECH TIPS: ALPINE CALCULATING APPROACHES



Getting on a route early enough is crucial to success in the alpine, and most of the time

an hours-long approach stands between you and the base. To estimate the amount of time needed for an approach, use the following calculation for a conservative figure: 1 hour for every 1,000 feet of elevation gain + 20 minutes for every mile traveled. That means an approach that climbs 3,000 feet over 5 miles will take about 4 hours, 40 minutes. Keep in mind this is for trail travel only, so if you're boulder-hopping or trudging up talus, it could take much longer.

HANWAG FRICTION GTX BOOTS



BURLY, BUDGET-FRIENDLY BOOTS WITH MAXIMUM COMFORT

"When faced with hiking and climbing 10 miles wearing these straight out of the box, I immediately surrendered to getting major blisters," one tester said of a climbing trip to Germany. "I was pleasantly surprised when they fit perfectly and were extremely comfortable from the get-go, thanks to the super-flexible upper. Blister count: zero." With a specialized clamping system at the ankle, the double adjustment allows for some serious fine-tuning in the fit, as you can change the foot and ankle independently. Leave it loose for the hike in, then tighten the foot for vertical ice. Vibram rubber and a lugged sole made them great for long approaches and sticky enough for technical slabs. **\$380; hanwag.com**

THE NORTH FACE SHADOW 40 + 10



HAUL-IT-ALL MINIMALIST PACK

Load this up with all your gear for a night at basecamp, approach the line the next morning, and then climb to the summit of a long alpine route—all with this versatile pack. One tester rocked it for more than 1,800 technical feet in the Tetons, plus miles-long trail approaches. Forty liters and the ability to extend to 50 offer plenty of space for climbing gear, food, water, and the multiple layers necessary for the ever-changing conditions of the alpine during shoulder season. The roll-top opens quickly for fast access to the inside—a necessity since it doesn't have any outside pockets or a lid—and it sheds precip like water off a duck's back. Remove the framesheet, hipbelt padding, and interior sundries pocket to save weight, and use the side compression straps to make it stable for climbing. **\$179; thenorthface.com**



Erik Leidecker enjoys clean granite on the 500-foot *McTech Arête* (5.10-), Bugaboos, Canada.

High-performance
bargain tool

TRANGO RAPTOR

“You get what you pay for” didn’t become an overused consumer cliché for nothing, but the Raptor will have you backtracking. “This tool competes with my go-to tools that cost almost twice as much as these,” one tester said after two weeks of ice and mixed climbing in the Northeast. “Now I feel silly for shelling out so much dough!” Testers loved the simple, streamlined design with a small curve in the shaft and an offset handle (meaning it’s angled slightly backward), which offered a solid amount of sticking power with each moderate swing. The pinky rest made the tools comfortable and easy to use without over-gripping, and the ergonomic double handle made matching hands and technical movement a breeze. Important update from last year: Designers made the main handle slightly larger so big-pawed ice climbers will fall in love with these, too. Nitpick: The removable head weights have Phillips-head screws; testers would have preferred the more standard, field-friendly, dime-size flathead. **\$175; trango.com**



BEAL OPERA UNICORE 8.5



LIGHT, SKINNY, DRY ROPE

Touted as the lightest single rope in the world, the Opera 8.5 weighs in at a mind-bending 48 g/m—that’s 7.4 lbs. for the 70-meter version. Rated as a single, half, and twin, its uses are endless, and our testers “took this rope for multi-pitch alpine to ice top roping to redpoints of mixed routes.” We don’t recommend making this your workhorse cord, but it stands out for alpine with its airy weight and incredible UIAA-certified Golden Dry treatment. “After full days in Ouray’s Box Canyon getting clobbered by falling ice and dipping into the river, the Opera was still bone-dry at the end.” Plus, Unicore keeps the core protected if the sheath gets cut. **\$220 (60m); libertymountain.com**

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR SCRAMBLER 30



FULLY WATERPROOF COMPACT HAULER

Light and fast is your mantra above treeline, and the Scrambler 30 embodies that ethos. It weighs in at just 1.5 lbs. and—major bonus—it’s waterproof. “A low-profile design and protection from rain and dripping ice make this pack my one-and-only for alpine missions,” said one tester who wore it all along the Eastside of the Sierra. The waterproofing comes from OutDry, a membrane that keeps the main compartment sealed, and a seam-taped lid. This pack has a chest strap, waistbelt, two outer pockets, gear loops on the sides (smart!), and a rope strap on top, it perfectly carries climbing essentials. **\$130; mountainhardwear.com**

EDELRID WING HARNESS



BARELY THERE HARNESS

There are a few imperatives for all alpine gear; pack small, be light, and work so well you forget it’s there. Edelrid’s new Wing harness nails all three without sacrificing comfort. “It folds as flat as a shirt and disappears in your pack,” said one tester after a week in Wyoming’s Wind River Range and a summit of Switzerland’s Matterhorn. “And it’s comfortable to wear while scrambling, hiking on approaches, or in between pitches.” Credit a laminated, 3-D design that wraps your waist and legs with wide swaths of padding, while adjustable leg loops—rare in a harness of this weight class—ensure a custom fit. **\$70; scarpa.com/edelrid**

TECH TIPS: ALPINE

3 CRUCIAL LOWER BODY STRETCHES



Long hikes and equally lengthy routes can be hell on a climber’s body, so stay fresh by doing these

three stretches after a day in the mountains. Hold each for 20 to 30 seconds, longer if it feels good.

Lizard Pose: Get into a lunge with back leg straight; bring both hands to the ground inside your forward leg. Drop farther into this until you can weight elbows and forearms on the ground.

The Figure 4: Lie on your back and bend one leg so its ankle is on the other leg’s knee (should look like a 4). Reach your arms through to the non-bent leg, and pull both legs toward your chest.

Pigeon Pose: Sit with one leg in front, bent 90° at the knee with the outside of that leg flat on the ground. The other leg should be straight out behind you with knee, shin, and top of foot on the ground. Lean forward for extra stretch.

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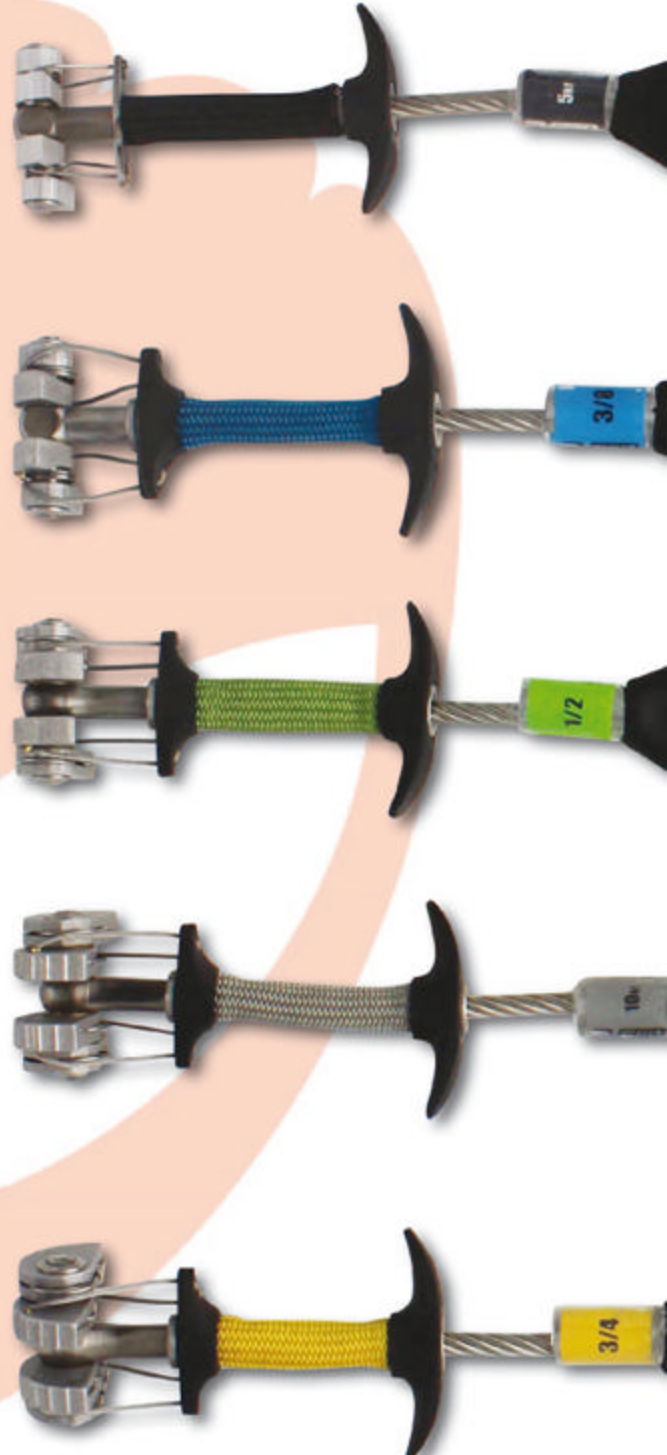
Ergonomic Rubber
Thumb Pull

Stronger Aluminum
Cable Swage

Higher Strength
& Flexibility Steel
Cable

Improved Trigger
Design

20% Reduced
Head Profile





Haulbag durability in a bullet pack

FREE RANGE STUD

Testers stumbled upon this pack in a small gear shop in Bend, Oregon, and had to check it out for the Stud's haulbag aesthetic and durability crossed with its leader-pack size and structure. "And that's exactly what you get," one tester explained, "full-on burl and resilience with the compactness and simplicity of a pack that's quite enjoyable to wear while climbing." This 20-liter hauler has one large compartment with an internal zipper pocket, but "the sleeve extends past the main body of the pack so you can stuff quite a bit more in there, then stabilize it with the top strap that doubles as a rope-carry system." The backpanel has breathable mesh and a removable bivy/sit pad that provides rigidity, padding from gear, and flexibility, a great combination for climbing long hours and squeezing through tight chimneys. And at almost 1 lb. exactly, it won't weigh you down. **\$99; freerangeequipment.com**

GRIVEL TECH MACHINE



PERFECTLY BALANCED HIGH-TECH ICE TOOL

The flatter angle of the pick combined with the aggressive backward angle of the handle worked together to give testers more leverage and power with every swing. Full review on page 24.

BROOKS-RANGE ALPINE BIVY SACK

DURABLE, CARRY-EVERYWHERE SHELTER

"Waterproof in sideways rain, completely rugged, no trade-offs for the light weight, and pretty roomy," one 5'10" tester said after using the bivy sack in the Adirondacks of New York and the Sierra Nevada mountains of Spain. With 40-denier nylon on the bottom, no water leaked in, even when sleeping on a mossy, wet ground, and 15-denier nylon on top cuts weight and sheds water easily, thanks in part to the fully taped seams. The large zipper opening made it easy to get into and out of, and it provided a nice, large ventilation option for muggier conditions: "No condensation here! Can't say the same for my partner who was in a tent, though," the tester explained. It weighs in at just over 1 lb. and packs down to the size of a 20 oz. water bottle, giving you no reason not to carry it for every alpine adventure. **\$250; brooks-range.com**



Mountaineering axe with steeper performance

PETZL SUMMIT EVO

"This tool perfectly bridges the gap between a classic, straight-shaft axe for mountaineering use and an aggressive, curved-shaft tool for steep, technical ice," one tester said. "Plus, the rubberized grip provided better handling and precision when the snow got steep." An aluminum body keeps the weight down at 14.8 ounces for the 59 cm version (52 cm and 66 cm also available), but a stainless-steel head puts some weight and thus power behind every swing. A sharp, slightly bent adze allowed for super-fast step-chopping and anchor-digging, while a pointed spike at the bottom cut into a frozen, tightly packed snow layer like a warm knife in butter. "Take this if your route is mostly glacier and snowfield travel peppered with a few short, steep sections." **\$170; petzl.com**

Remember When Tents Didn't Have Lights...



Dancing in the moonlight in Indian Basin,
Wind River Range, WY - Braden Gunem



Award Winning mtnGLO™ Tent Light Technology

*patent pending

- Built-in LED lights
- Lightweight, flexible & durable
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USB compatible controller with
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Monumental achievements start with **big dreams.**

Sterling Team member Kevin Jorgeson is the embodiment of determination and resilience.

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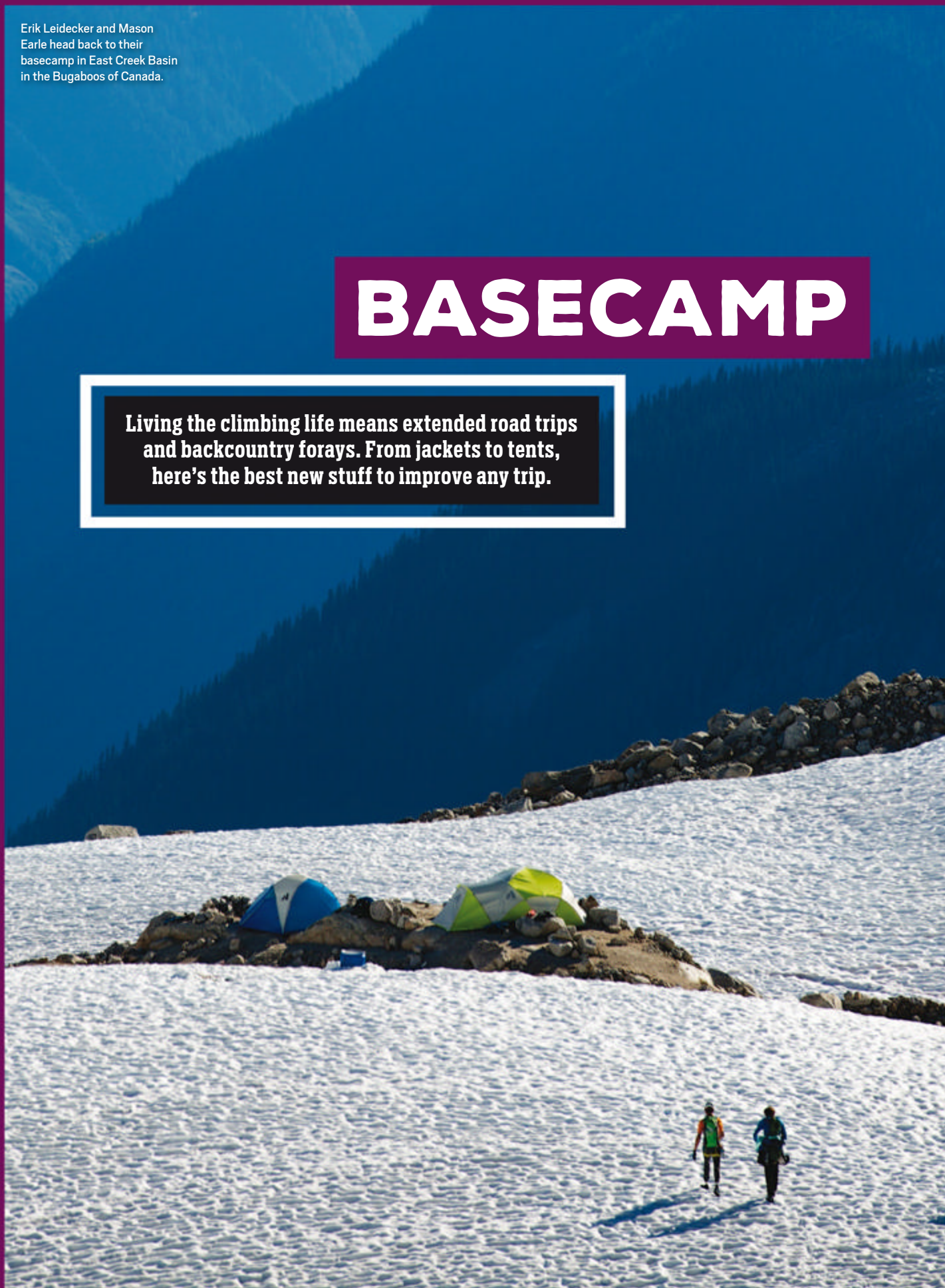
STERLING ROPE

Elevate Your Experience.

Erik Leidecker and Mason Earle head back to their basecamp in East Creek Basin in the Bugaboos of Canada.

BASECAMP

Living the climbing life means extended road trips and backcountry forays. From jackets to tents, here's the best new stuff to improve any trip.



SPRING APPAREL GUIDE

19 products to wear when sun turns to showers then to snow and back to sun on those fickle shoulder-season days

TOPO DESIGNS FLEECE JACKET

Functional
fashion



This isn't your average mountain-town fleece. Made with a combination of Polartec 200 fleece and nylon, this pull-over not only keeps you warm when it's cold out, it also wicks sweat, dries fast, and breathes when you start to overheat. Plus, the nylon adds enough durability so that

testers didn't have to worry about rock abrasion. "It wears and feels like your favorite soft pullover, but performs like a technical midlayer," one tester said. "What more could I ask for?" Design is slim so it tucks under a harness without too much bulk, but it's loose enough to wear a baselayer or T-shirt underneath. **\$129; topodesigns.com**

MERRELL CHILL SEEKER

Stylish,
functional,
versatile
"shacket"



"Not only have I gotten more compliments on this jacket than anything in my life, but I've also worn it more than anything in my life—and I've only had it for two months!" This piece, insulated with lightweight Thinsulate Platinum, acts like a heavy shirt in cold weather, or a light jacket in more temperate conditions, and it's fully reversible so you can wear it multiple days in a row and no one will be the wiser. The snap buttons made it easy on—easy off for one tester when he wore it at the crag: Take it off for working hard on the wall in the winter, then throw it on when your feet hit the ground. The Chill Seeker will become your go-to workhorse piece for October through April. **\$149; merrell.com**

BERGAN'S ENGRAPP WOOL ZIP HOOD



SIMPLE STYLE, UNLIMITED FUNCTION

Most of us want climbing clothes to feel like cotton T-shirts but function like ultra-technical polypropylene, which is why merino wool has become a go-to material. This 100% merino, long-sleeve hoody is soft next to skin, pulls sweat off the body and dries it quickly, and its naturally occurring antimicrobial properties mean you can wear it a few dozen times without worrying about any smell factor. "The light feel of this pullover means it serves two purposes in my quiver: cold weather baselayer or thin midlayer. Layer underneath, over, or both, and you won't feel like the Michelin Man." Thumb loops make it easy to pull on, and a scuba-style hood slides comfortably under a helmet in cold temps. **\$105; bergans.com**

MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT KINESIS

Two-in-one alpine jacket



Get the squall-fighting ability of a wind shell and the insulation of a midlayer fleece in one svelte and breathable package. "It's perfect for long days of alpine multi-pitch climbing where you can experience all four seasons in a matter of hours," said one Wind River Range tester. "I wore it from dawn till dusk on a windy, 40° day and was comfortable while on the move." The secret? The 30-denier nylon shell has been through a finishing process called calendering, which uses heat and pressure to give the fabric a sheen that adds to its wind- and precipitation-blocking ability without sacrificing much in the way of breathability. Gridded fleece in the hood and arms and Polartec Alpha in the chest and back preserve your heat. **\$250; mountainequipment.co.uk**

MILLET RED NEEDLES GTX

LIGHTWEIGHT BREATHABLE HARD SHELL

"The most packable and breathable full-protection shell I've ever used," said one tester after romping around in rainy Spain for three months. "And I love the innovation with what I dubbed 'lat zips,' which puts ventilating but bulky and sometimes uncomfortable zippers more on your back than in your arm-pits." The entire jacket is Gore-Tex Active, which provides maximum breathability, but under the arms is a stretchier version, so the jacket moves with you and "never felt stiff like my other true alpine shells." The trim fit and high hand pockets make it ideal for wearing with a harness, and at less than 14 oz., it's not a lot of weight. A fully adjustable, helmet-compatible hood with moldable brim, reinforced shoulders for more durability, and an inside security pocket round out the features. **\$430; milletusa.com**



LIFE'S TOO SHORT TO STAY INDOORS

Richard Riquelme

Mountain guide. Avalanche trainer. Ski instructor. Self-described "crazy Chilean." Uses the Nammatj 2 GT.



"THE NAMMATJ 2 GT is both lightweight and super strong without compromising comfort and storage. It is my tent of choice for trips when I'll need to hunker down for a long spell of bad weather or when traveling with a partner. I especially love its roomy vestibule which doubles as a classroom during inclement weather."



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BROOKS-RANGE BRISA T



Warm your core
with less weight

You might ask yourself why the heck you'd want an insulated T-shirt, but after sending several windy pitches in the Adirondacks of upstate New York, our tester figured it out: "Keep your core warm, and the rest will follow." With more weather protection and insulating properties than a vest, the Brisa has a lightweight nylon shell that repelled light drizzles and lots of wind. Having the short sleeves increased warmth without restricting movement, especially when this Northeastern tester was going for hand jams, full arm scums, and generally abrading his arms on the rock. Polartec insulation and Power Dry technology work together to maintain warmth and breathability, and a single chest pocket offers easy access to a bar or your phone. **\$120; brooks-range.com**

BLACK DIAMOND ALPINE START HOODY

Wind and water
resistant,
plus a touch of
warmth



"I didn't realize I needed a jacket like this until I wore the Alpine Start for a weeklong trip to El Potrero Chico, Mexico," one tester said after experiencing consistent high winds, fog, drizzle, and light snow on a winter trip to the big wall sport climbing mecca. "Now I can't imagine not carrying it with me everywhere." Designed as a light wind jacket or very lightweight softshell, this piece has super-stretchy Schoeller fabric to offer mid-level protection from wind and water, which in turn keeps you warmer. Breathability is top-notch, as one tester never sweated out even when temps reached 60° and sunny and she wore a baselayer and heavy midlayer underneath. It packs into the chest pocket, ideal for an outer layer, and easily clips to your harness. **\$149; blackdiamondequipment.com**

MOUNTAIN STANDARD 1/4 ZIP FLEECE SHIRT



NEW AND IMPROVED GRIDDED FLEECE

The tried-and-true gridded fleece has proven its performance for years, but the Mountain Standard quarter-zip ups the ante with additional comfort and style. "It felt like I was wearing my favorite sweater," one tester said after a full winter rocking it at crags and boulderfields in Colorado and Utah. "The weight is perfect, too, and I feel like I'm getting two pieces in one. I can wear it as a light midlayer or a heavier baselayer." The grid on the inside works to pull moisture off your skin where it's in contact (the squares), while the channels between the squares allow air to flow through, dry you off, and prevent sweat buildup. **\$70; mountainstandard.com**

OUTDOOR RESEARCH DEVIATOR HOODY



PERFECTLY DESIGNED ACTIVE INSULATION

This jacket truly steps up the midlayer insulation game by combining two layers into one in a full-zip hoody. By putting all the right fabrics in all the right places, designers have eliminated the need for a baselayer and a light midlayer. The torso has warm but breathable Polartec Alpha insulation, while the arms, back, and hood are made out of Polartec Power Dry High Efficiency fabric, which wicks moisture and dries it fast—"faster than any other comparable fabric. I rarely felt sweaty, even though I was working hard on long, uphill approaches in the alpine." The Deviator can be left on when you're working hard, stop, start, and stop again; you won't overheat or get cold. **\$185; outdoorresearch.com**

SAXX BOXER



Nobody talks about taking care of one's nether regions while climbing, but it's time someone addressed the, uh, sticky situation. "These are possibly the best thing to happen to male undergarments since the boxer/brief mash-up," one tester said after a single use. The trick is a duo of internal mesh panels that create a "comfort pouch" to keep the family jewels secure and prevent chafing. And it works—really well. One tester has climbed indoors and out, skied, hiked, and traveled in these undies for a few months, and he said, "You know a piece of apparel is functioning when you feel comfortable and don't even notice it." Soft fabric, non-restrictive waistband, and legs that don't ride up? Perfect underwear. **\$25-\$37 (depending on style); saxxunderwear.com**

TOREN FUNDAMENTAL SHELL



FULL-PROTECTION HARD SHELL WITH STYLE

Not every type of climbing needs a hard-core \$650 alpine shell, so the designers at Toren took the most important features of a technical shell and put them into a rain jacket with modern styling. Fully waterproof with three-layer Toray polyester, the Fundamental breathed really well and offered full ventilation thanks to large pit zips. A helmet-compatible hood was fully adjustable around the face and skull, and an overall low-profile design with a slightly longer torso fit smoothly under a harness. Plus, hand pockets were situated high enough that they were accessible when climbing. "Anytime I'm climbing anything but alpine multi-pitch, I take this shell," one Colorado tester said. Major bonus points: A touch screen-compatible inner Napoleon pocket protected testers' phones from the elements but kept them usable. **\$245; toren.is**

MAXIM[®] DYNAMIC ROPES

Strong. Durable. Won't Ever Quit.
Just like you... MAXIM[®] was made for this.



Jonathan Siegrist, Tian, 5'14", Lions Head, Ontario. Photo by Aidan Odonais

NEW ENGLAND ROPES
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DYNAMIC ROPES



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Paul Creme and Julie Ellison test out the full range of uses of the Patagonia Nano-Air's FullRange insulation in Rocktown, Georgia.

FREE COUNTRY EQUINOX

"I had given up on softshells for versatile but technical performance until I wore this for an entire week of climbing in high winds, blowing snow, drizzling rain, full-on downpours, and single-digit temps," one tester said after a staff gear-testing trip to the many climbing areas around Chattanooga, Tennessee. High-pile fleece on the inside provides a lot of warmth in a soft, cozy way, an inner membrane offers a high level of water resistance, and a stretchy polyester outer stood up to abrasion without restricting movement. The whole package breathed so well that testers never overheated or sweated out, even on high-output jaunts. An oversized hood goes easily over a helmet, and tapered cuffs made sliding sleeves under gloves a snap. "With so much warmth, versatility, and breathability, this softshell just became my go-to winter jacket!" **\$100; freecountry.com**



Warm, weather-proof softshell

BLACK DIAMOND LEVITATION PANTS

TIGHTS FOR LADY CLIMBERS

"Finally a climbing company makes climbing-specific leggings for the ladies!" one tester rejoiced after a week of cold bouldering in Joe's Valley, Utah. "The wide, soft elastic waistband never dug into my stomach and felt great next to skin, and the ankle-covering length made these ideal for winter. Plus, the low-profile design made it easy to fold the bottom up to capri length in shoulder-season temps." A cool little pocket in the waistband is just big enough to fit a credit card or a key, and the gusseted, reinforced crotch makes these built for high heel hooks and post-session yoga. Testers were definitely impressed by durability, too: "Constant butt-scooting down boulders hasn't given these a single pill or pull!" **\$69; blackdiamondequipment.com**



QUALITY GEAR FOR LIFE

PICKETS - SNOW ANCHORS - PULLEYS - DESCENDERS - EDGE PROTECTION
CARABINERS - RIGGING PLATES - RINGS

Photo by David Kennedy of Iron Monkey in Park City, Utah



The Spire's ability to easily lower a climber while in auto-block mode leads the pack in ease of use, and its right at home on your skinny alpine rope.

- Auto-block mode for 1 or 2 seconding climbers.
- Lowering a seconding climber is quick, simple and secure.
- UIAA Certified for ropes from 7.5-10.7mm (optimized for ropes 8.9-9.5)
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ARC'TERYX PSIPHON SL PULLOVER

Stretchy warmth
and wind
protection

Softshells can feel bulky and sometimes restrictive, but the thinner Psiphon blows those notions out of the water. Nylaz material (85% nylon, 15% elastane) is relatively thin, incredibly stretchy, and provides just the right amount of warmth over a midlayer when working hard high on an alpine wall or getting to the base. An oversized hood fits over a helmet, and a half-zip with over-harness hand pockets increases breathability and venting options. “Technical performance that packs down small—about the size of a cantaloupe, weighs barely anything (10.1 oz.), but delivers a big punch of warmth and weather protection.” **\$149; arcteryx.com**



PATAGONIA NANO-AIR



NEVER-TAKE-IT-OFF JACKET

“A super-breathable new insulation that comes in a really stretchy and easy-to-wear package,” one tester said. Read more about the most versatile insulation out there on page 24.

PATAGONIA VENGA ROCK PANTS

EVERYDAY CLIMBING PANTS

The Venga registered as one of our testers' favorite pants—ever. Organic cotton and 2% spandex provide durability and comfort with a touch of stretch for high-stepping and heel hooking. A tester who lived four months in the Venga, traveling from South Dakota to West Virginia to California, called them “one pant to rule them all!” A universally praised feature was the “OppoSet” button that works with a built-in adjustable belt to fine-tune fit. **\$79; patagonia.com**

SUPER.NATURAL BASE TIGHT 175



Perfect
temperature
regulation

By blending 48% merino, 48% polyester, and 4% Lycra, designers at super.natural have found the perfect performance balance between seemingly opposite fabrics and put them into baselayer bottoms with “the absolute best fit I’ve ever experienced,” said one tester after three months of winter in them. “No droopy butt, no cutting into my stomach, and nothing is too tight.” Polyester does what it’s supposed to do: pull sweat off the skin, dry quickly, and be durable without inhibiting the merino and its natural properties: soft against skin, insulate with breathability, and prevent stinkage. Then throw some Lycra in for extra stretch and complete freedom of movement. With such thin fabric and flat seams, they even layered under climbing tights perfectly. **\$70; sn-supernatural.com**





MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR DYNAMA PANT

COMFY YOGA PANT MEETS TECHNICAL TROUSER

The genius behind the Dynama's construction is almost too good to be true: Designers put an ultra-soft and cozy wide waistband (zero zippers and buttons) on top of a pair of comfortable, trim-fitting synthetic slacks. "It's a brilliant combination on a pair of pants that are technical in performance but pajama bottom—soft in comfort," one tester said after four months in the pant, bouldering in Bishop, California, and frozen sport climbing at Foster Falls, Tennessee. The nylon-spandex material shed light rain and snow and dried really quickly after getting soaked from multiple hours in a downpour. A climber-friendly cinchable ankle hem made it easy to get the loose fabric out of the way without cuffing, and deep hand pockets offered secure storage without bulky zippers. "Plus, a stylish fit means I never have to take these off—yes!" **\$70; mountainhardwear.com**

THE NORTH FACE THERMO- BALL HYBRID

Do-it-all
insulation

This active insulator combines the best characteristics of synthetic and down and adds in a smart design for bonus breathability to be one of the best midlayers of the year. With proprietary ThermoBall in the torso and stretchy nylon (no insulation) in the hood, sleeves, and side panels, this full-zip hybrid is "a workhorse insulator for any and all conditions, from rain to snow to dry, and it's ridiculously stretchy so you'll never feel restricted." It breathes in high-heat zones like the armpits, and increases warmth in colder zones like the stomach and back. It's super-packable and regains loft more quickly than traditional synthetics. **\$180; thenorthface.com**



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CARE ABOUT
OUR SAFETY,
OUR SCHEDULES
AND WE ALL
FEEL LIKE
FAMILY."

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PRINCETON TEC SYNC

Easy-to-operate
head torch



By replacing the awkward, low-profile button of most headlamps with a huge dial, designers have increased the usability of this head torch tenfold. “I always struggle with buttons, especially when wearing gloves, and this easily solves that problem in a straightforward, operator-friendly way,” one tester said. Use a large dial on the side to go straight

to the exact mode you want—red, spot beam, or flood light—with a simple twist, and then adjust the whole unit up or down for various angles of view. The Sync solves another problem with “the simplest battery opening I’ve used”: The other side (not the back) flips open to slide three AAA batteries in. Ninety lumens and 200 hours of burn time round out this 2.9 oz. package. **\$30; princetontec.com**

LIFESTRAW GO BOTTLE



WATER FILTER AND BOTTLE IN ONE

“You literally just fill this bottle and go,” one tester said after a summer of international adventure travel. “The built-in filter saves me time and keeps me hydrated wherever I go.” Sip through the straw, a hollow fiber membrane filter in the middle of the bottle traps the bad stuff, and all you get is clean, drinkable water, whether it’s from a stream or even a puddle. The 22 oz. bottle is BPA-free and gives zero aftertaste, unlike iodine tablets. Remove 99.9% of bacteria in up to 264 gallons of water, simply by blowing out the dirty water after each use. “A total game-changer for adventure travel—no more buying bottled water or fretting about getting giardia in a third world country.” **\$35; buylifestraw.com**

PUKU

Portable pocket
power



This sleek, diminutive battery pack delivers a powerful—pun intended—punch. Charge it from the wall in about five hours, and then carry it with you for an extra 36 hours of talk time, 900 hours of standby, and 153 hours of media play on an iPhone. “It adds up to several days of charge when I’m in the backcountry only using my phone in airplane mode to take pictures and have in case of emergency. Plus, you can charge two devices at once,” one tester said after a trip to Mexico where there was a serious shortage of outlets. “Gives me great peace of mind for travel. Plus, the colors are rad, so it actually looks cool!” It’s slightly thicker than an iPhone 5 and weighs about 8.7 oz. **\$99; gotpuku.com**

BIOLITE NANOGRID



CHAINABLE, RECHARGEABLE CAMP LIGHTS

"Well, this is too cool!" one tester said of these travel-friendly, packable, rechargeable lights. The main PowerLight acts as a lantern, flashlight, and central power hub for the SiteLights, and each little unit has its own off/on and dimming functions so you can customize the exact lighting you want. "I set up the brightest on the picnic table and the others closer to the chilling area for more ambient lighting," one tester said after taking them down to El Potrero Chico, Mexico. You can also charge your phone and other small electronics off the PowerLight; it will charge a GoPro 3.5 times and a phone three times, or run itself up to 72 hours. **\$100; biolitestove.com**

1 VOICE



HEADWEAR WITH BUILT-IN HEADPHONES

We've all seen that kid at the gym who smugly walks up to a boulder problem with headphones in and starts climbing, only to have his cell phone plummet to the ground and rip the ear buds right out of his head. Or maybe you've been that kid. Either way, 1 Voice is the solution. This headwear (three styles: headband, beanie, and ear warmer) has a Bluetooth receiver built in, as well as small ear buds with a short cord that plugs into the receiver. Set your phone in a safe spot, start playing music, and get to crushing! "This revolutionizes my gym sessions, as I can choose my music without having to fiddle with a cord or a phone in my pocket. Plus, I don't have to listen to the bad music they play at my gym." Testers found the 30-foot range was ideal, and the included rechargeable battery lasts about seven to eight hours. **\$59 (all styles); 1voicenyc.com**

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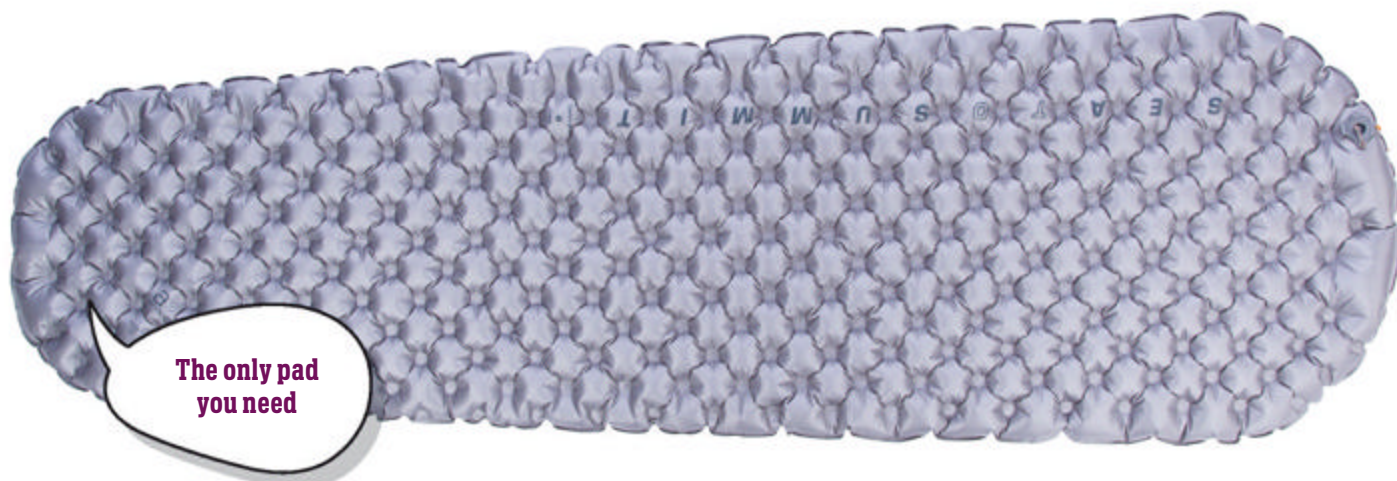
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CAMPING

The best in overnight gear from the editors of our sister magazine *Backpacker*

SEA TO SUMMIT COMFORT PLUS MAT



Tester feedback was unanimous: The most comfortable night's sleep I've ever had on a pad that packs this small. Combine that with a unique design that uses two separate air chambers—giving you 1.25" of insurance against a leak—and you get our new favorite pad. Pump the bottom half to max capacity to lift you off any roots or

rocks, and then fine-tune the top half to your preferred level of firmness. Five hundred forty-eight individual air cells provide structure and better support than traditional horizontal or vertical chambers. The insulated model amps R-value (warmth) from 1.5 to 5 for \$30 and 4.5 oz. more. And all this comfort still compresses to 4" x 7". **\$170–\$220 (comes in four versions); seatosummit.com**

BIG AGNES RATTLESNAKE SL2 MTNGLO



PARTY TENT

With mtnGLO, tent nights are guaranteed to be a lot more fun. Strings of mini LED lights line the canopy's seams: Flip the switch, and the lights come on, just like at home. "Perfect for playing cards or just dealing with gear explosions while not blinding your partner with accidental headlamp beams to the face," said one Front Range tester. Lights run on two AAA batteries or any USB-equipped battery pack and add negligible weight. At just 3 lbs. 9 oz., the tent is great for both car camping and back-country adventures. Thanks to all-mesh walls and two fly vents, the interior stayed condensation-free on 28^o nights in the Sierra. And it feels roomier than you'd expect, given the smallish 27-square-foot floor. **\$350; bigagnes.com**

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR HYPERLAMINA SPARK

DOWN-LIKE PERFORMANCE

We love down. Like love it, love it. It packs smaller and gets warmer faster than any synthetic, but for the first time ever, we found ourselves choosing synthetic over feathers on trips down to 30°—whether or not it looked like rain. The Spark squishes to 7" x 12" in the included compression sack—about the same size of a comparably priced down sack. Credit the proprietary Thermal.Q insulation: longer fibers loft in curlicue shape, while shorter ones fill the spaces between. The two-way center zip makes it easy to sit up and do basic tent chores without getting all the way out of your bag. Extra credit: The reduced number of seams makes the interior feel like silk sheets. Rated to 35°, it weighs in at 1 lb. 10 oz. **\$220; mountainhardwear.com**





PAT'S BACKCOUNTRY BEVERAGES

WATER BECOMES BEER

Enough said. Read the full review of this specialized carbonating water bottle system on page 28.

SEA TO SUMMIT X-POT

WORLD'S TINIEST COOK POT

From the department of huh-what-holy crap!—we bring you the X-Pot, a 2.8-liter collapsible silicon cook pot with a heat-dispersing aluminum bottom. It shrinks from 4.5" tall to just 1". This innovation solves the main problem with cookware: Pots are bulky and cumbersome. Dirtball bonus: The flexible walls are easy to scrape clean, and the anodized aluminum base shed even a layer of caked-on brownie batter. **\$50; seatosummit.com**



MSR WINDBOILER

All-purpose, all-conditions cooker

Integrated stove systems have done OK in cold weather in the past, but the WindBoiler ups the ante with a new and improved design. The radiant burner locks onto the pot with a metal ring that surrounds the heating element and funnels heat directly to the bottom of the pot. Designers included a pressure regulator in the burner to maintain a consistent flow of gas from the canister; this allows the stove to keep fast boil times (2.5 minutes for 1 liter of water) even when cold temps make air pressure drop. "The WindBoiler works in harsher conditions, the pot locks onto the burner for added security, and the whole kit still packs small." **\$130; msrgear.com**



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SCOTT ADAMSON on the ZIGGLE W15, Zion Backcountry, Utah

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Heading back to basecamp after a long, very cold day of climbing at Foster Falls, Tennessee.



FOOD

Eat right with these snacks to climb healthy and strong

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With potassium, antioxidants, fiber, and omega-3 fatty acids, chia seeds are somewhat of a miracle food. Then consider the fact that you can grind them into a powder and covertly add them to cereal, oatmeal, smoothies, and even pancakes, and it might seem too good to be true. Studies have also shown that chia seeds help with maintaining tendon strength—a crucial boost for climbers to stay injury-free. “I just add some to my breakfast smoothie, and I’ve felt stronger than ever, particularly after overcoming a pulley injury.”
\$27 (12.7 oz. whole seed); salbasmart.com



"This chalk is awesome...I realized I had to chalk up way less, and my hands never felt greasy or wet."
- Andrew Bisharat

"FrictionLabs won me over...Honestly I didn't think I would see this much of a difference. My hands stay dryer, longer. Period."
- Alex Johnson

"For real though, this is the best chalk I have used."
- Melissa Strong

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- Alex Puccio

"I am in fact very picky about my chalk, and can rarely say I actually think a brand of chalk stands out above others, but your chalk, well, it is in a league of its own! I am very impressed!"
- Dave Graham



"These guys make the best chalk in the game hands down. If you haven't tried their chalk you're missing out."
- Michael O'Rourke

"Got the chalk! It is incredible!!!!!"
- Paul Robinson

SO DID THEY

"I never endorse a product I don't believe in, and Friction Labs is the best chalk money can buy."
- Jamie Emerson

"It's softer and feels way better on your hands, and keeps my hands from sweating. My hands don't dry out as much after use."

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The level of performance and consistency is so clear, I don't know how I could look/go back.
- Chris Schulte

PATAGONIA PROVISIONS SMOKED SALMON



In keeping with their “let’s make the world a better place” ethos, Patagonia is expanding into an industry they think needs a lot of help but can eventually make a huge global impact: food. To that end, they’ve taken a first step with delicious, vacuum-packed, wild, smoked sockeye salmon. “Forget protein powder and jerkies, this is how I prefer my backcountry protein from here on out. It’s so damn good!” one tester said. Have it as a snack on the trail, build your meal with the salmon as the main protein, or impress friends at home with a tasty appetizer. **\$12; patagoniaprovisions.com**

CHUAO CHOCOLATE BARS



BEST COCOA-BASED SNACK EVER

“Just stop whatever you’re doing and buy a handful of these,” one tester suggested after tasting the Oh My S’mores! and Pretzel Toffee Twirl flavors. These specialty chocolate bars kept her going on multiple long days out in the Tetons: “When I’d normally lose my appetite and force crappy power bars down or just not eat, I was really excited to open these and gobble them down, which kept my fuel tank full and my body energized—no more hanger!” Unique and fun taste combinations plus ethically sourced cacao and all-natural ingredients make these the “most excellent snack ever.” **\$6; chua-ochocolatier.com**

JUSTIN'S NUT BUTTER SQUEEZE PACKS



CLIMBER'S PORTABLE BEST FRIEND

Peanut butter is a go-to source of calories and energy for a climber—it’s salty, filling, relatively cheap, and just plain delicious. Now, a favorite brand gets more portable with travel packs. You get all-natural ingredients, no hydrogenated oils or bad stuff, and several yummy flavors (Honey Almond and Chocolate Hazelnut were testers’ favorites) offer a wide variety of options to a wide variety of palates. “When I was trying *Shadow of Death* (V6) in Joe’s Valley, I felt like I was bonking. Then I ate one packet, and within five minutes my head felt clear, and I crushed it.” **\$12 (case of 10); justins.com**

**Chef-created
dehydrated meals**

GOOD TO-GO



“These are a total game-changer for the backcountry,” a once-reluctant tester said after trying the Herbed Mushroom Risotto on a cold climbing trip. When award-winning chef Jennifer Scism met her now-husband and started going on outdoor adventures, she noticed there was a real lack of quality, nutritious foods that were also portable. So she started creating her own delicious dehydrated meals and eventually wanted to spread them to a wider audience. She designed them to taste like real food and to offer real nutrition and energy. Good To-Go uses natural ingredients to make a meal, and then dehydrates it—simple as that. “This is better than I could make at home!” one tester said. **\$7 (varies slightly between flavors); goodto-go.com**

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*photo courtesy of Eddie Bauer/Jake Norton






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Should you start trad climbing?

BY KEVIN CORRIGAN

TO THE KIND of climbers that slap “Keep Tahoe Bold” stickers on their bumpers, trad is the only true form of climbing. To many a sport climber and boulderer, it appears complicated, slow, and committing. Plus, all that jangly metal on your harness makes you sound like a wind chime. Yep, trad climbing can be intimidating. It requires a lot of gear, practice, and a strong head. It’s also an incredibly rewarding way to climb and allows you to reach places that would otherwise be impossible to access. So, should you start trad climbing?

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Bill Morse suits up for a larger than life burn on "California 5.12", a steep and thuggy 12c at Red Rock Canyon, Nevada Photo: Ben Moon



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